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(54) **PANCAKE LENS INCLUDING DIFFUSER**

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See application file for complete search history.

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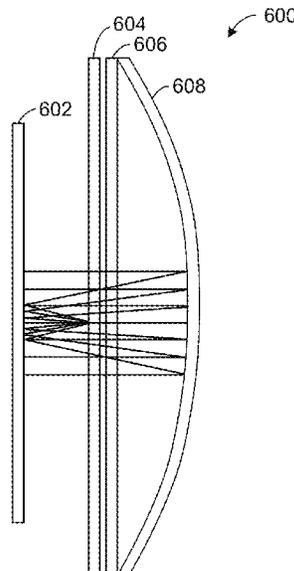
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Various embodiments set forth a foveated display system and components thereof. The foveated display system includes a peripheral display module disposed in series with a foveal display module. The peripheral display module is configured to generate low-resolution, large field of view imagery for a user's peripheral vision. The foveal display module is configured to perform foveated rendering in which high-resolution imagery is focused towards a foveal region of the user's eye gaze. The peripheral display module may include a diffuser that is disposed within a pancake lens, which is a relatively compact design. The foveal display module may include a Pancharatnam-Berry Phase grating stack that increases the steering range of a beam-steering device such that a virtual image can be steered to cover an entire field of view visible to the user's eye.

20 Claims, 14 Drawing Sheets



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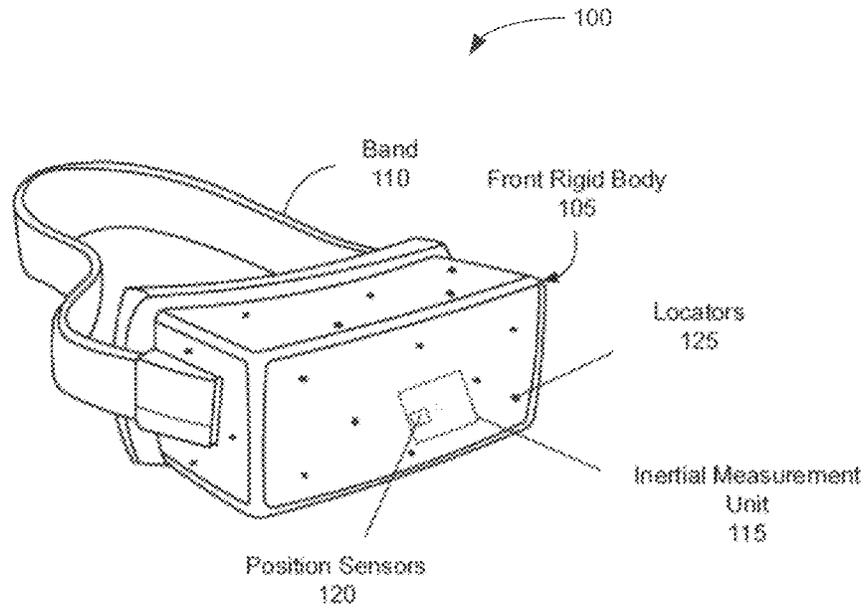


FIG. 1A

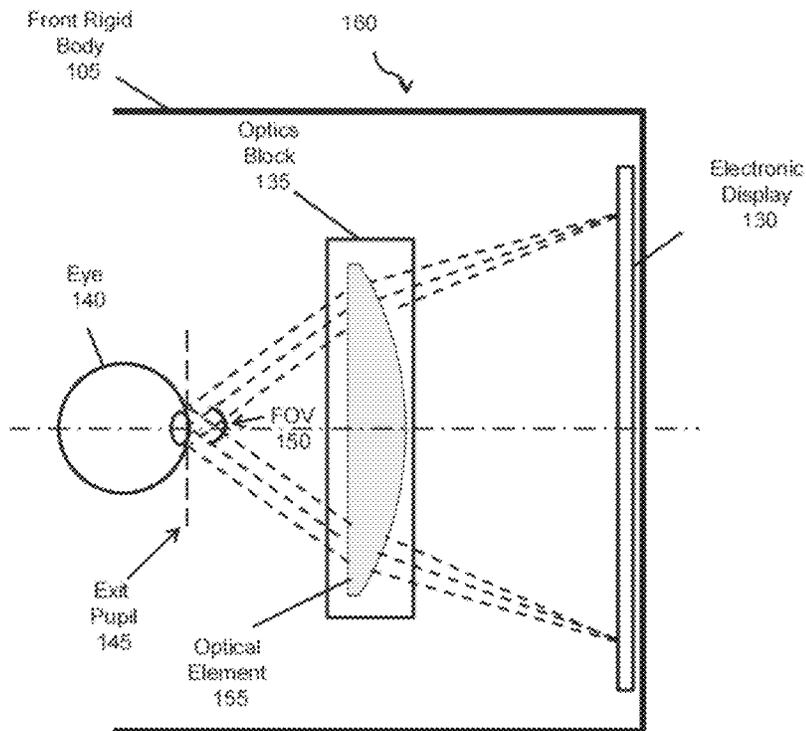


FIG. 1B

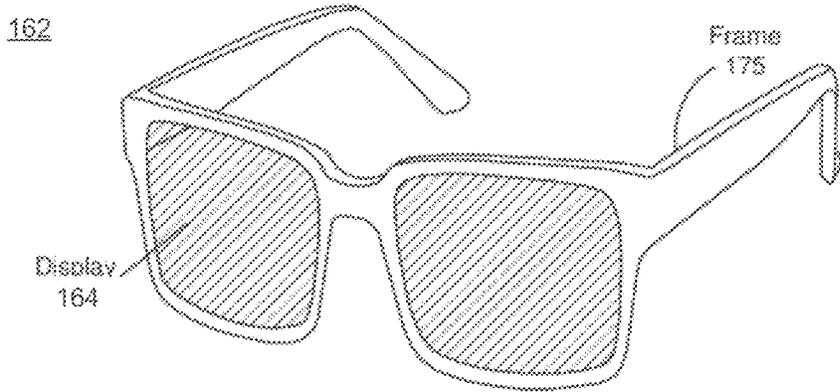


FIG. 2A

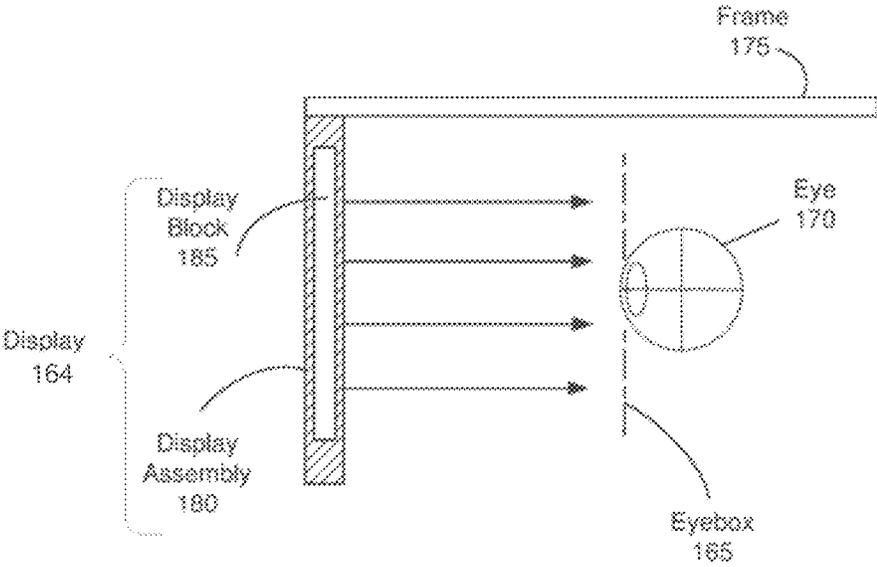


FIG. 2B

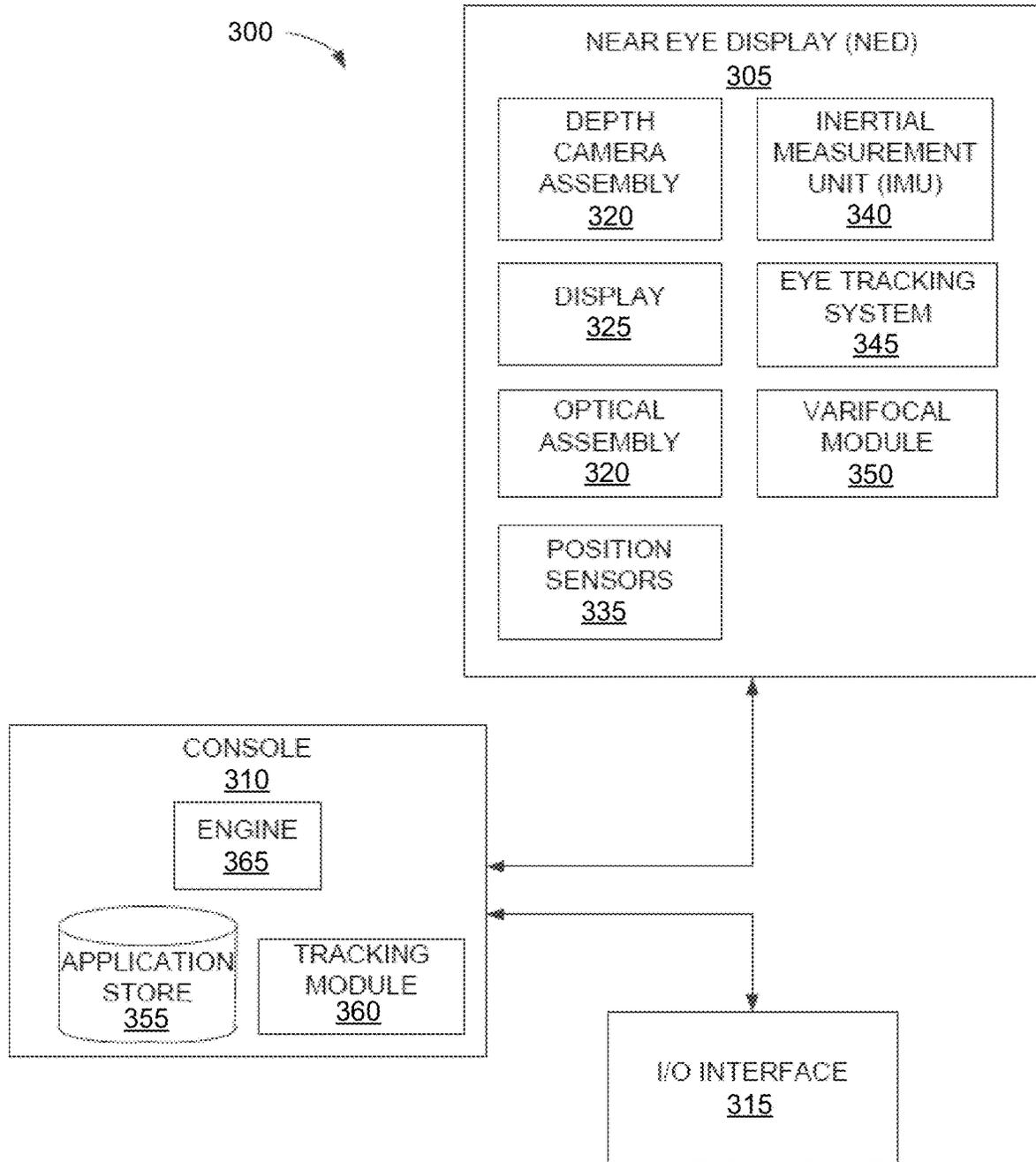


FIG. 3

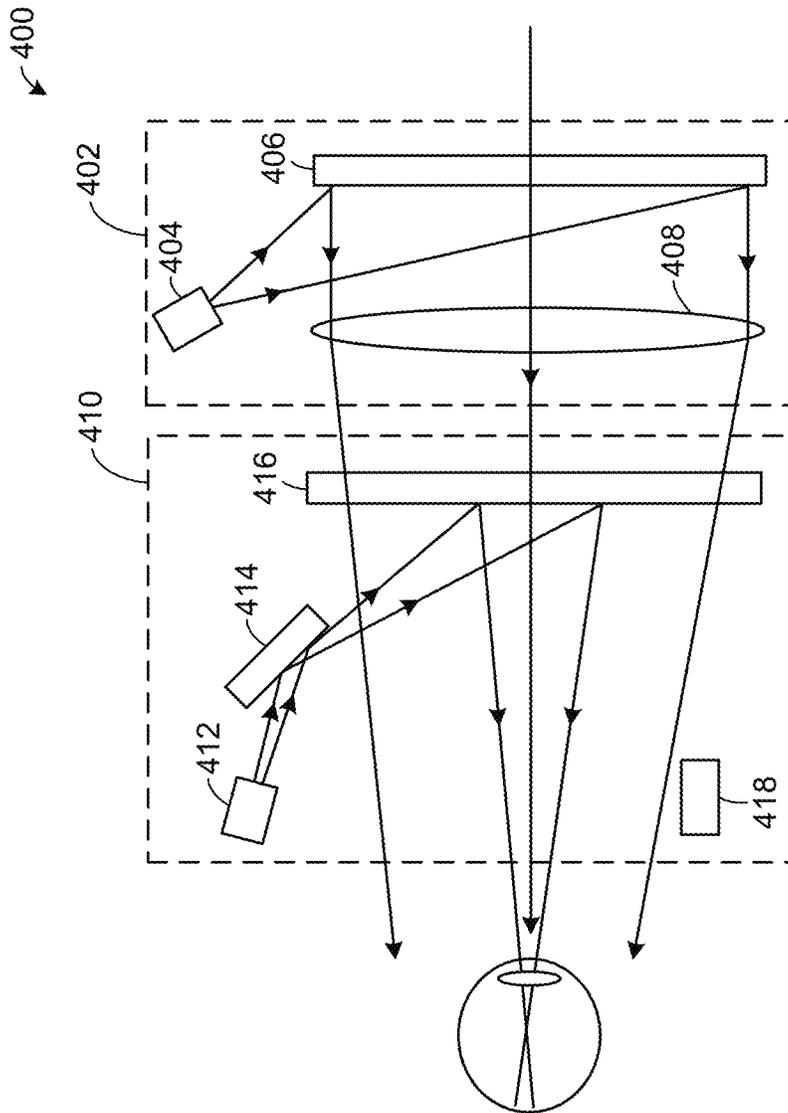


FIG. 4

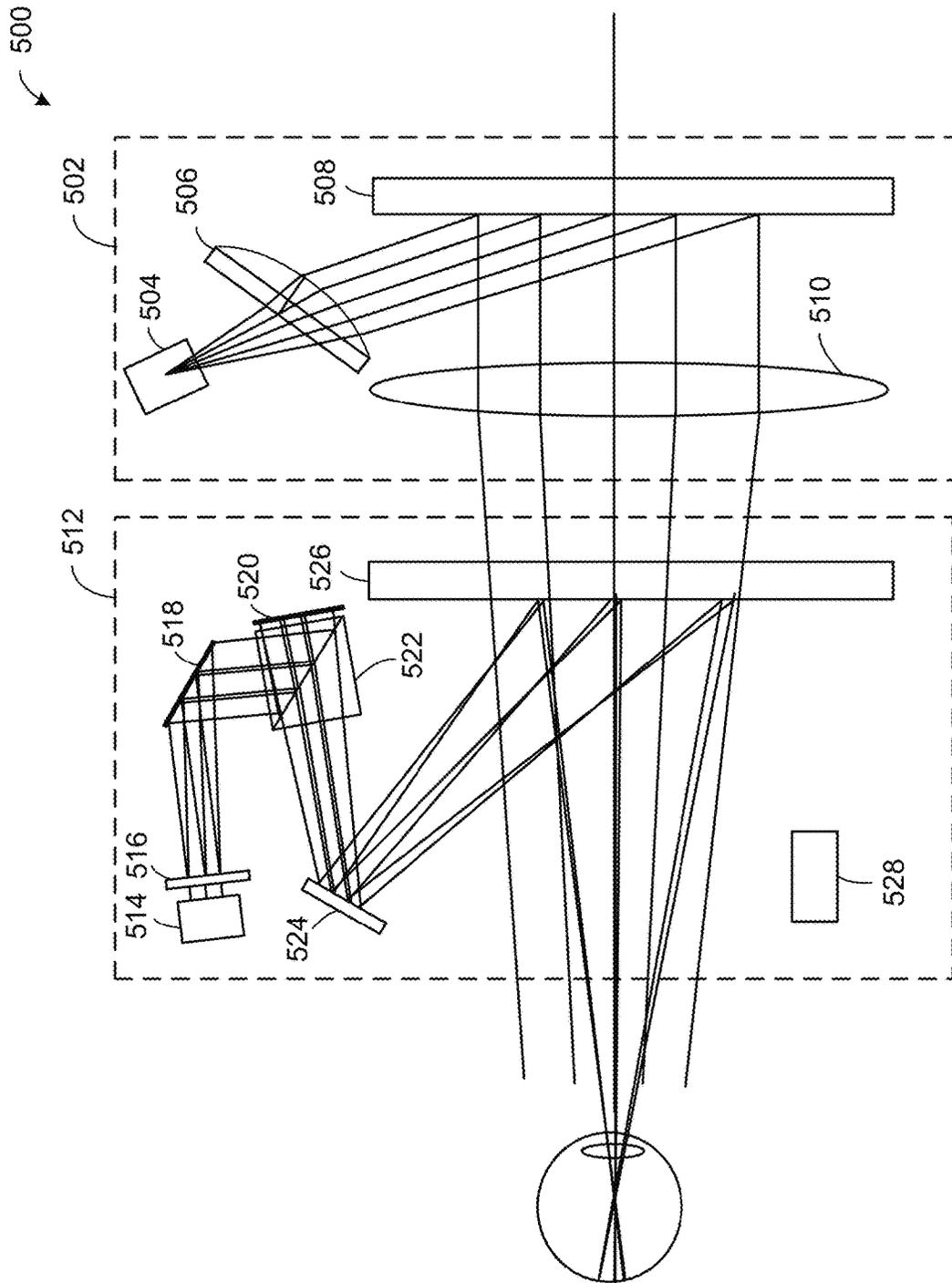


FIG. 5

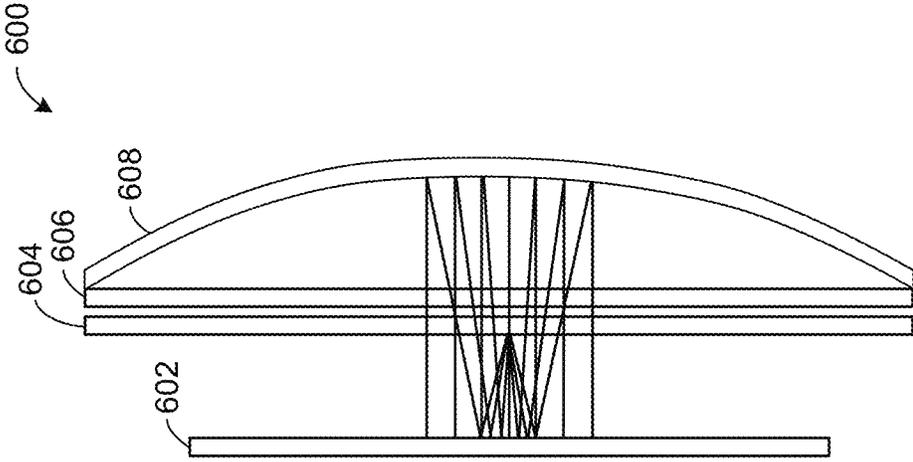


FIG. 6

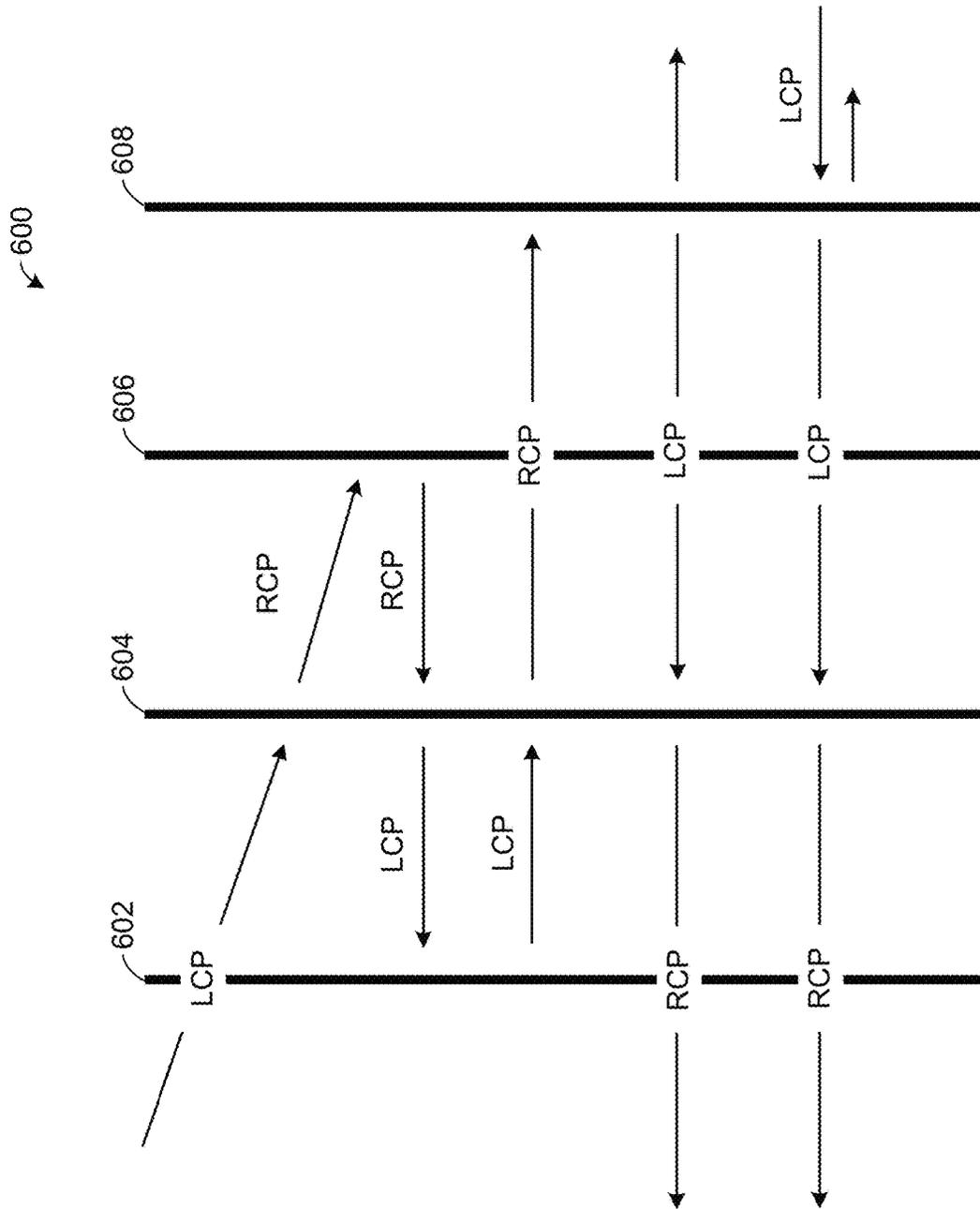


FIG. 7

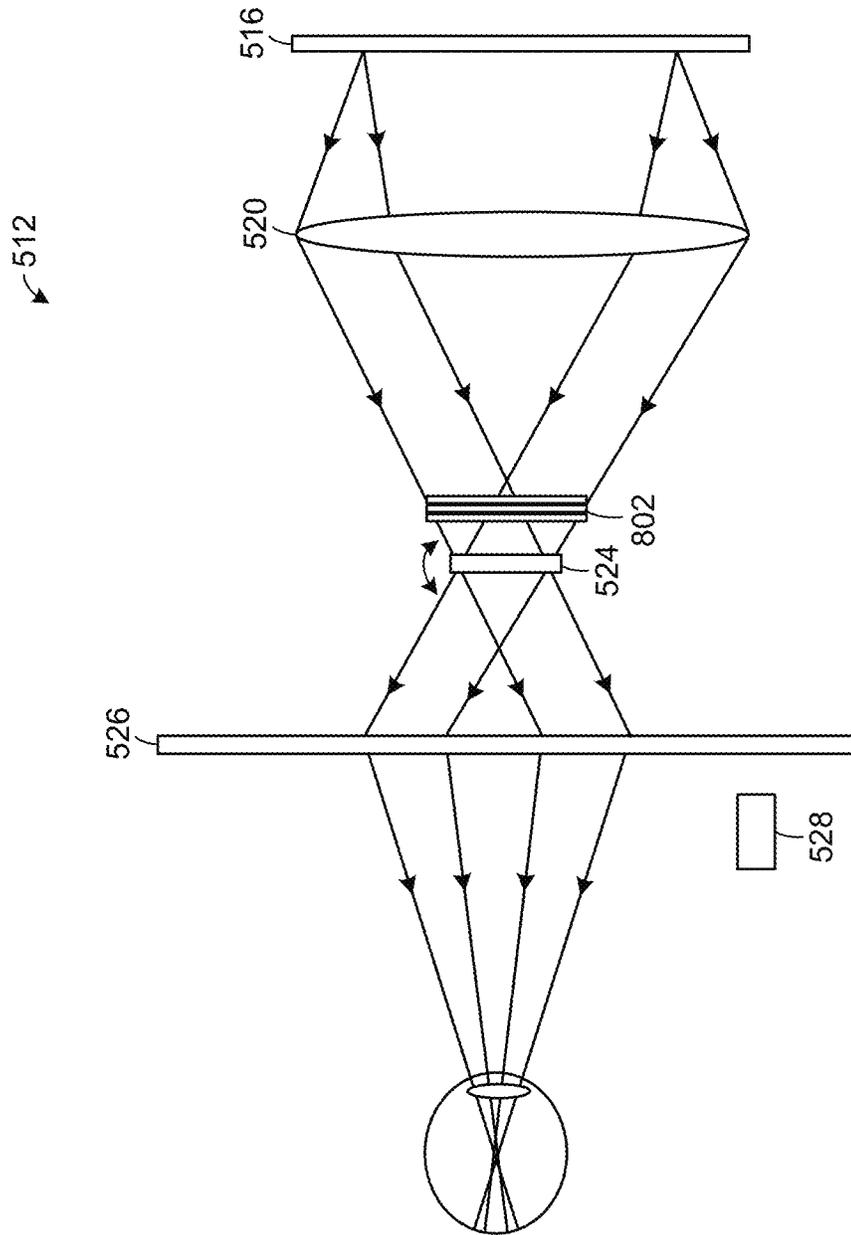


FIG. 8

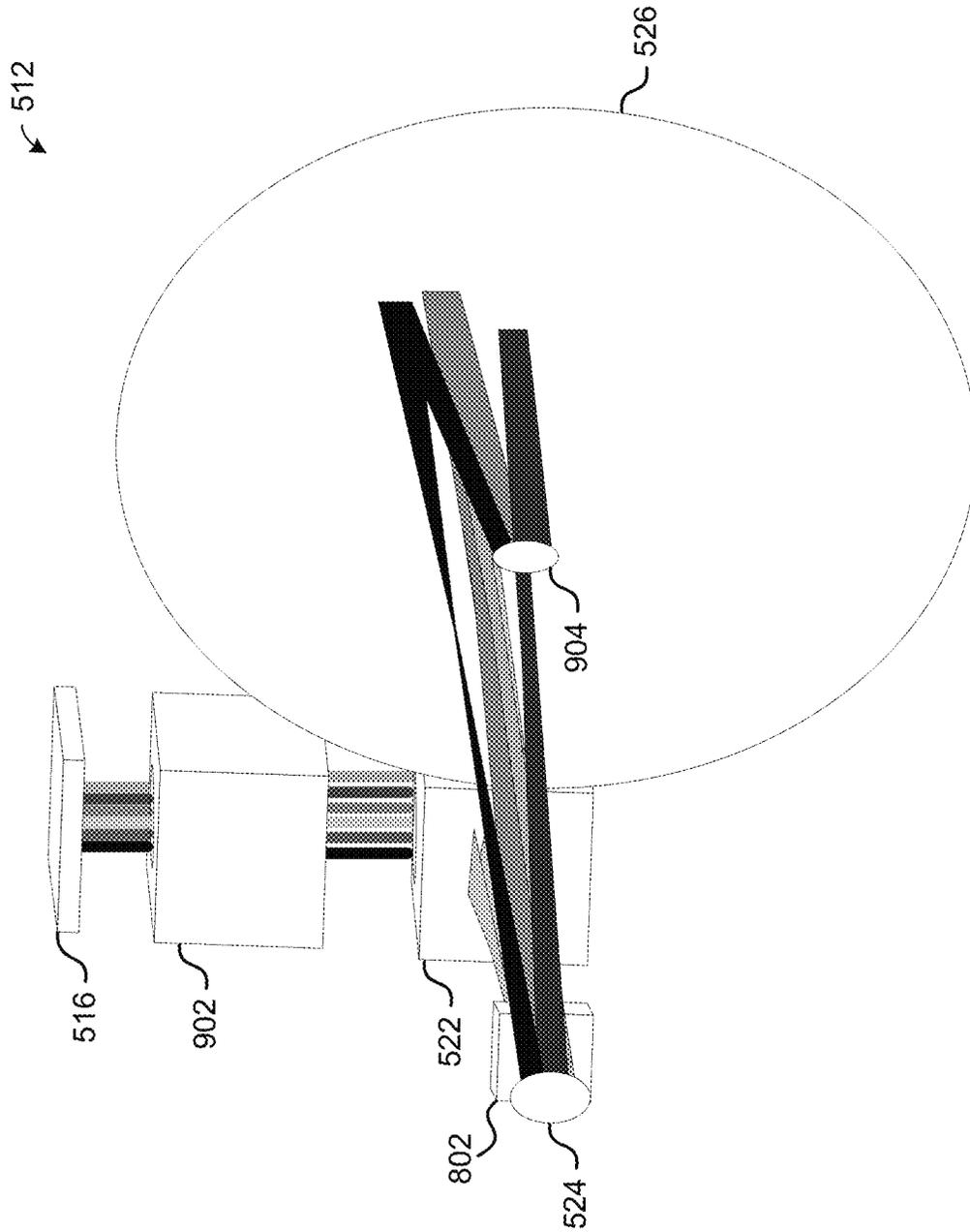


FIG. 9

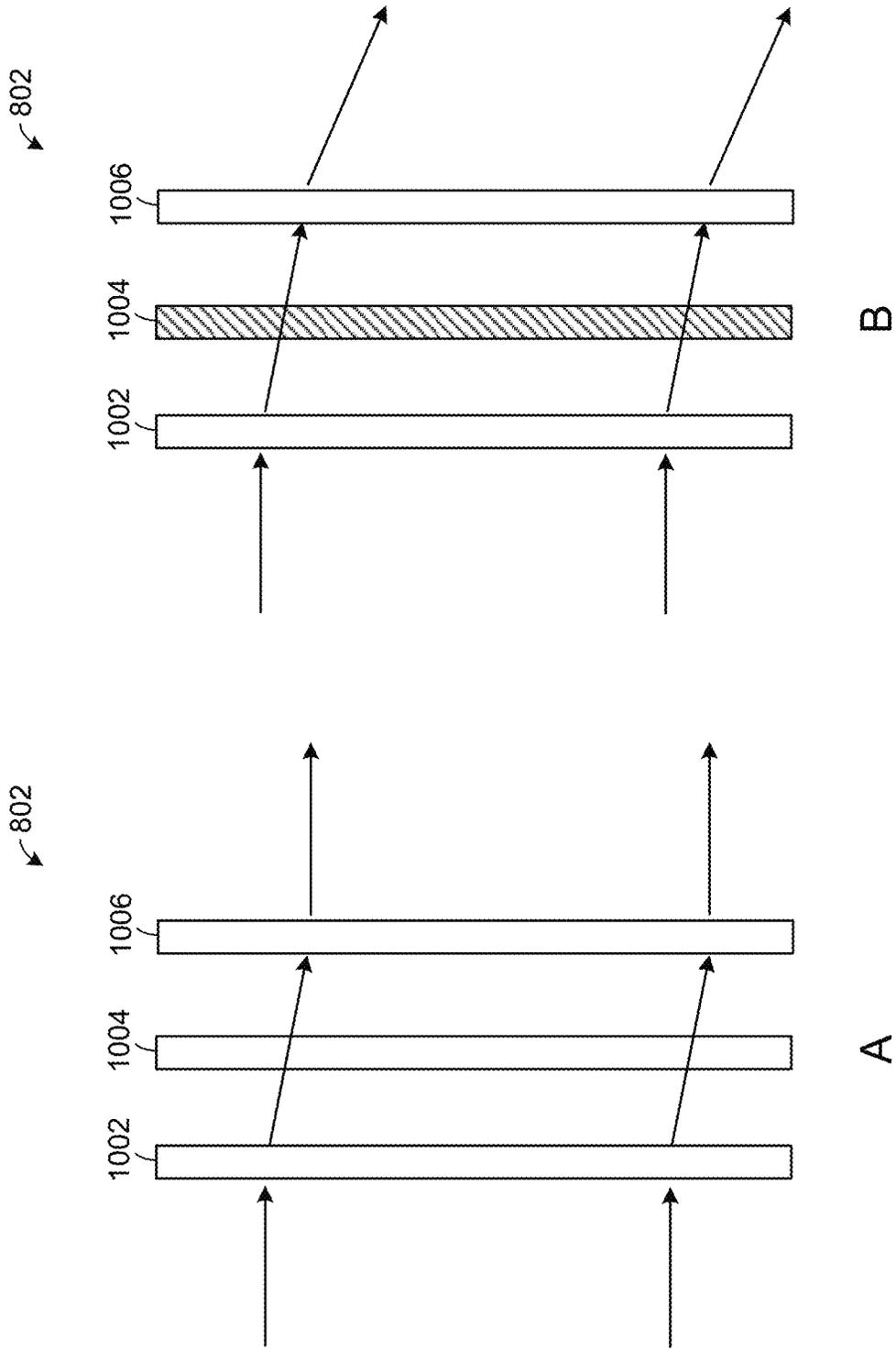


FIG. 10

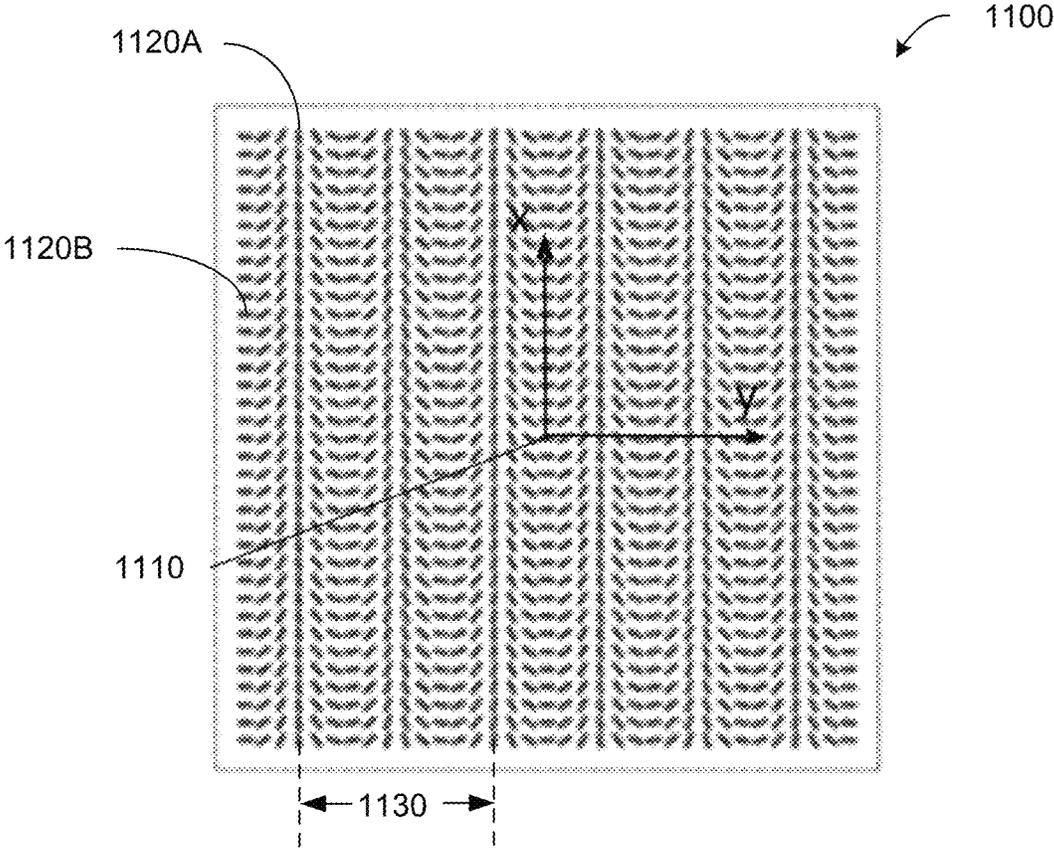


FIG. 11

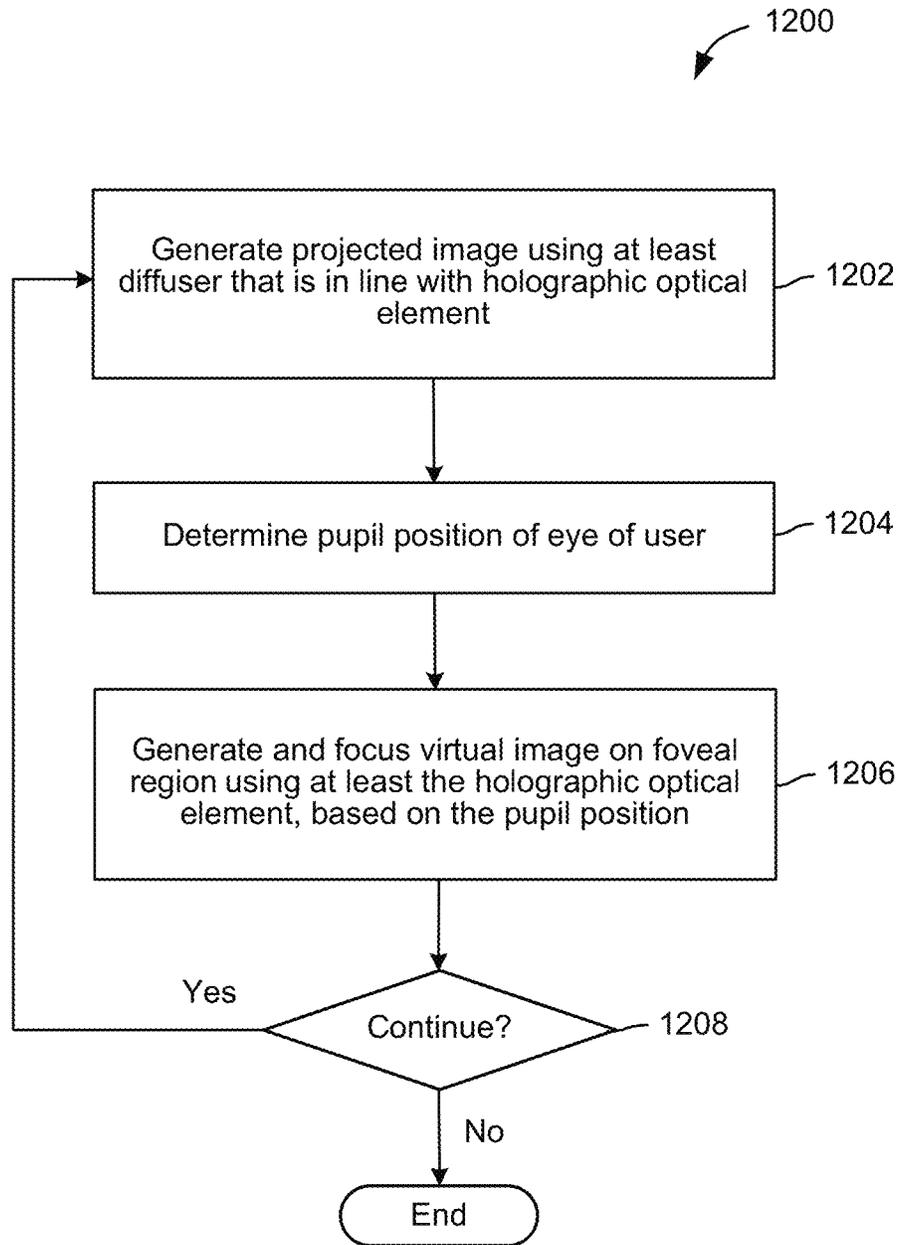


FIG. 12

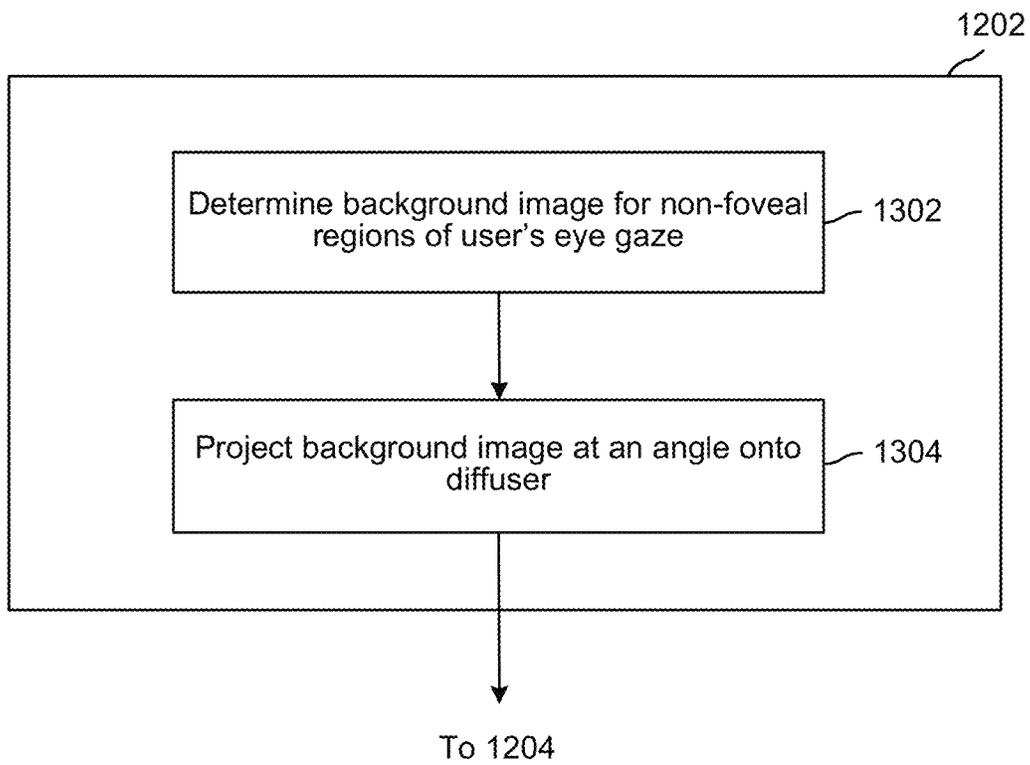


FIG. 13

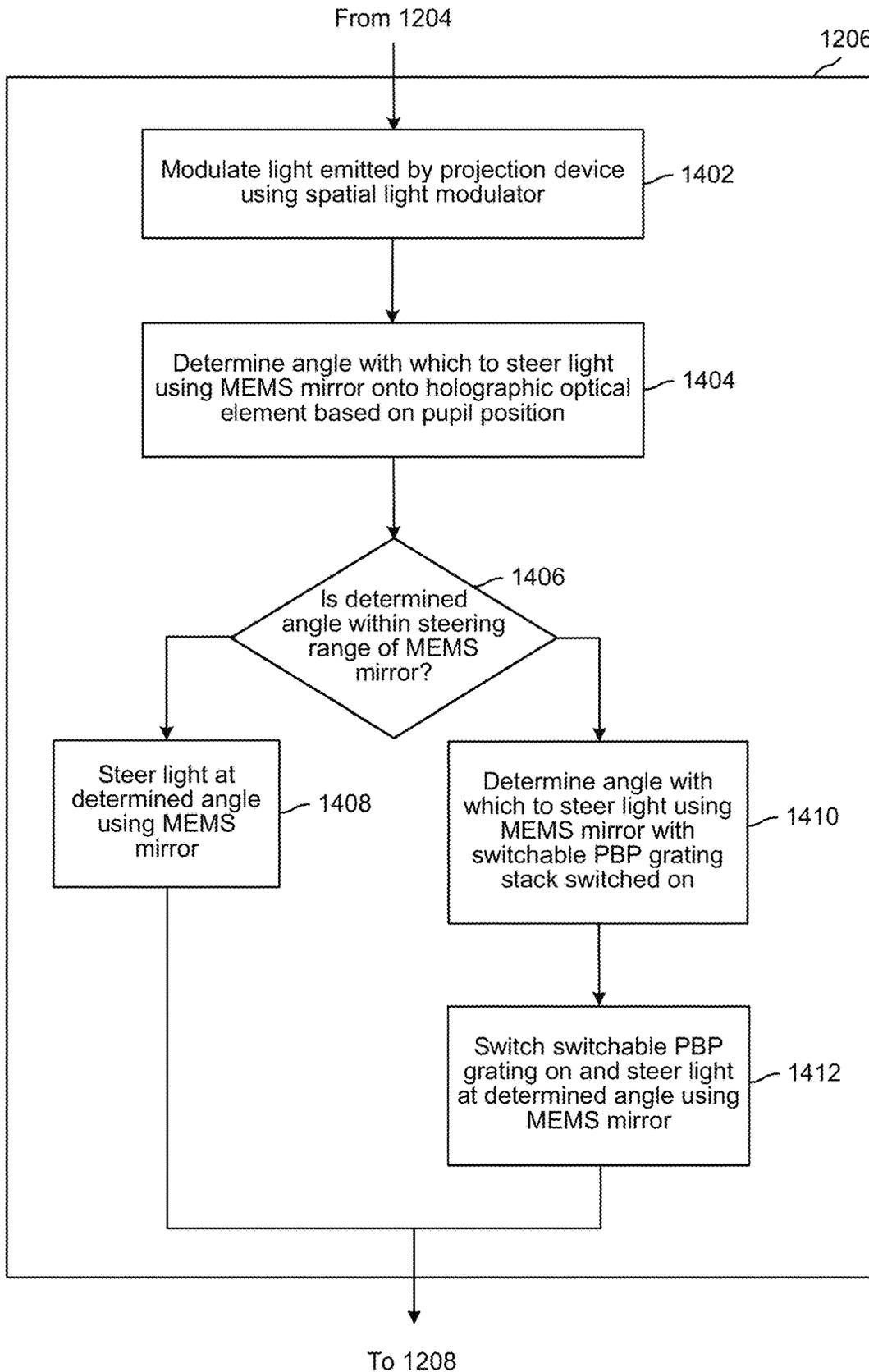


FIG. 14

PANCAKE LENS INCLUDING DIFFUSER**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS**

This application is related to patent applications entitled “Foveated Display System” Ser. No. 16/735,409 and “Switchable Pancharatnam-Berry Phase Grating Stack” Ser. No. 16/735,409, which are assigned to the same assignee of this application and filed on the same day as this application, and which are herein incorporated by reference in their entireties.

BACKGROUND**Field of the Various Embodiments**

Embodiments of this disclosure relate generally to optical systems and, more specifically, to a foveated display system.

Description of the Related Art

Artificial reality systems display content that may include completely generated content or generated content combined with captured (e.g., real-world) content. A realistic display should account for what a user sees in his or her peripheral vision, as well as the high-acuity vision produced by the fovea centralis (also referred to herein as the “fovea”) located in the back of the user’s eyes. For some artificial reality systems, such as head-mounted display (HMD) systems, a small form factor and light design are also desirable. Designing such artificial reality systems has proven to be difficult.

SUMMARY

One embodiment of the present disclosure sets forth a pancake lens. The pancake lens includes a half-wave plate. The pancake lens further includes a polarization- and angular-selective mirror. The pancake lens also includes a diffuser. In addition, the pancake lens includes a half mirror.

Another embodiment of the present disclosure sets forth a display system. The display system includes a projector. The display system further includes a pancake lens that includes a diffuser.

Another embodiment of the present disclosure sets forth a method. The method includes determining an image to display. The method further includes projecting the image onto a diffuser. The diffuser is included within a pancake lens.

One advantage of the foveated display systems disclosed herein is that the foveated display systems generate high-resolution virtual imagery for a foveal region of a user’s eye gaze along with low-resolution, large field of view background imagery for other regions of the user’s eye gaze. A diffuser that is used to generate the projected imagery can be disposed within a pancake lens, which is a relatively compact (i.e., thinner) design that is beneficial for applications with a HMD or other devices where a small form factor and weight are considerations. In addition, a switchable Pancharatnam-Berry phase grating stack can be used to increase the steering range of a beam-steering device used to generate the high-resolution virtual imagery such that, e.g., light associated with the virtual imagery can be steered to cover an entire field of view that is visible to the user’s eye.

These technical advantages represent one or more technological advancements over prior art approaches.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

So that the manner in which the above recited features of the various embodiments can be understood in detail, a more particular description of the disclosed concepts, briefly summarized above, may be had by reference to various embodiments, some of which are illustrated in the appended drawings. It is to be noted, however, that the appended drawings illustrate only typical embodiments of the disclosed concepts and are therefore not to be considered limiting of scope in any way, and that there are other equally effective embodiments.

FIG. 1A is a diagram of a near eye display (NED), according to various embodiments.

FIG. 1B is a cross section of the front rigid body of the embodiments of the NED illustrated in FIG. 1A.

FIG. 2A is a diagram of a head-mounted display (HMD) implemented as a NED, according to various embodiments.

FIG. 2B is a cross-section view of the HMD of FIG. 2A implemented as a near eye display, according to various embodiments.

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of a NED system, according to various embodiments.

FIG. 4 is a schematic diagram illustrating a foveated display system, according to various embodiments.

FIG. 5 illustrates in greater detail components of a foveated display system, according to various embodiments.

FIG. 6 is a schematic diagram illustrating a pancake lens that includes a diffuser, according to various embodiments.

FIG. 7 is a ray-tracing diagram illustrating operation of a pancake lens that includes a diffuser, according to various embodiments.

FIG. 8 is a schematic diagram illustrating an optical configuration of the foveal display module of FIG. 4, according to various embodiments.

FIG. 9 illustrates in greater detail components of the foveal display module of FIG. 4, according to various embodiments.

FIG. 10 illustrates components and operation of a switchable Pancharatnam-Berry phase (PBP) grating stack, according to various embodiments.

FIG. 11 illustrates a PBP grating, according to various embodiments.

FIG. 12 illustrates a method for generating artificial reality content using a foveated display system, according to various embodiments.

FIG. 13 illustrates in greater detail one of the steps of the method of FIG. 12, according to various embodiments.

FIG. 14 illustrates in greater detail another of the steps of the method of FIG. 12, according to various embodiments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In the following description, numerous specific details are set forth to provide a more thorough understanding of the various embodiments. However, it is apparent to one of skilled in the art that the disclosed concepts may be practiced without one or more of these specific details.

Configuration Overview

One or more embodiments disclosed herein relate to a foveated display system. The foveated display system includes a peripheral display module disposed in series with

a foveal display module. The peripheral display module is configured to generate low-resolution, large field of view (FOV) imagery for a user's peripheral vision, while the foveal display module is configured to perform foveated rendering in which high-resolution imagery is focused towards a foveal region of the user's eye gaze. In addition, real-world light can pass through the peripheral and foveal display modules and be observed by the user.

The peripheral display module includes a projection device that projects background imagery for a user's peripheral vision onto a diffuser that diffuses the background imagery, as well as a pancake lens that increases the propagating distance of light such that the background imagery appears further away to the user. The diffuser is polarization, angular, and wavelength selective in some embodiments. Such a diffuser may be constructed using, e.g., a cholesteric liquid crystal material. In operation, circularly polarized light is projected onto the diffuser at a slanted angle and bounces twice within the pancake lens. In some embodiments, the diffuser may also be included within the pancake lens, which is a more compact (i.e., thinner) design than one in which the diffuser is external to the pancake lens.

The foveal display module includes a holographic display, a beam-steering device such as a micro-electro-mechanical system (MEMS) mirror, an angular- and wavelength-selective lens such as a holographic optical element (HOE) lens, and an eye tracking device. In operation, the beam-steering device is controllable to focus light from the holographic display towards a foveal region of a user's eye gaze via the angular- and wavelength-selective lens, based on a pupil position captured by the eye tracking device. In some embodiments, the foveal display module may also include a switchable Pancharatnam-Berry Phase (PBP) grating stack that increases a steering range of the beam-steering device. In such cases, the switchable PBP grating stack may include a switchable half-wave plate disposed between two PBP gratings. The diffraction angle produced by one PBP grating in the switchable PBP grating stack differs based on a handedness of polarization of light output by the switchable half-wave plate when the switchable half-wave plate is on versus when the switchable half-wave plate is off.

Embodiments of the disclosure may also include or be implemented in conjunction with an artificial reality system. Artificial reality is a form of reality that has been adjusted in some manner before presentation to a user, which may include, for example, a virtual reality (VR) system, an augmented reality (AR) system, a mixed reality (MR) system, a hybrid reality system, or some combination and/or derivatives thereof. Artificial reality content may include, without limitation, completely generated content or generated content combined with captured (e.g., real-world) content. The artificial reality content may include, without limitation, video, audio, haptic feedback, or some combination thereof. The artificial reality content may be presented in a single channel or in multiple channels (such as stereo video that produces a three-dimensional effect to the viewer). Additionally, in some embodiments, artificial reality systems may also be associated with applications, products, accessories, services, or some combination thereof, that are used to, e.g., create content in an artificial reality system and/or are otherwise used in (e.g., perform activities in) an artificial reality system. The artificial reality system may be implemented on various platforms, including a head-mounted display (HMD) connected to a host computer system, a standalone HMD, a mobile device or computing system, or any other hardware platform capable of providing artificial reality content to one or more viewers.

Embodiments of the disclosure may also include or be implemented in conjunction with an artificial reality system. Artificial reality is a form of reality that has been adjusted in some manner before presentation to a user, which may include, for example, a VR system, an AR system, a MR system, a hybrid reality system, or some combination and/or derivatives thereof. Artificial reality content may include, without limitation, completely generated content or generated content combined with captured (e.g., real-world) content. The artificial reality content may include, without limitation, video, audio, haptic feedback, or some combination thereof. The artificial reality content may be presented in a single channel or in multiple channels (such as stereo video that produces a three-dimensional effect to the viewer). Additionally, in some embodiments, artificial reality systems may also be associated with applications, products, accessories, services, or some combination thereof, that are used to, e.g., create content in an artificial reality system and/or are otherwise used in (e.g., perform activities in) an artificial reality system. The artificial reality system may be implemented on various platforms, including a HMD connected to a host computer system, a standalone HMD, a mobile device or computing system, or any other hardware platform capable of providing artificial reality content to one or more viewers.

System Overview

FIG. 1A is a wire diagram of a near eye display (NED) **100**, according to various embodiments. Although NEDs and head mounted displays (HMDs) are disclosed herein as reference examples, display devices that include foveated display systems may also be configured for placement in proximity of an eye or eyes of a user at a fixed location, without being head-mounted (e.g., the display device may be mounted in a vehicle, such as a car or an airplane, for placement in front of an eye or eyes of the user).

As shown, the NED **100** includes a front rigid body **105** and a band **110**. The front rigid body **105** includes one or more electronic display elements of an electronic display (not shown), an inertial measurement unit (IMU) **115**, one or more position sensors **120**, and locators **125**. As illustrated in FIG. 1A, position sensors **120** are located within the IMU **115**, and neither the IMU **115** nor the position sensors **120** are visible to the user. In various embodiments, where the NED **100** acts as an AR or MR device, portions of the NED **100** and/or its internal components are at least partially transparent.

FIG. 1B is a cross section **160** of the front rigid body **105** of the embodiments of the NED **100** illustrated in FIG. 1A. As shown, the front rigid body **105** includes an electronic display **130** and an optics block **135** that together provide image light to an exit pupil **145**. The exit pupil **145** is the location of the front rigid body **105** where a user's eye **140** may be positioned. For purposes of illustration, FIG. 1B shows a cross section **160** associated with a single eye **140**, but another optics block, separate from the optics block **135**, may provide altered image light to another eye of the user. Additionally, the NED **100** includes an eye tracking system (not shown in FIG. 1B). The eye tracking system may include one or more sources that illuminate one or both eyes of the user. The eye tracking system may also include one or more cameras that capture images of one or both eyes of the user to track the positions of the eyes.

The electronic display **130** displays images to the user. In various embodiments, the electronic display **130** may comprise a single electronic display or multiple electronic dis-

plays (e.g., a display for each eye of a user). Examples of the electronic display **130** include: a liquid crystal display (LCD), an organic light emitting diode (OLED) display, an active-matrix organic light-emitting diode display (AMOLED), a QOLED, a QLED, some other display, or some combination thereof.

The optics block **135** adjusts an orientation of image light emitted from the electronic display **130** such that the electronic display **130** appears at particular virtual image distances from the user. The optics block **135** is configured to receive image light emitted from the electronic display **130** and direct the image light to an eye-box associated with the exit pupil **145**. The image light directed to the eye-box forms an image at a retina of eye **140**. The eye-box is a region defining how much the eye **140** moves up/down/left/right from without significant degradation in the image quality. In the illustration of FIG. 1B, a field of view (FOV) **150** is the extent of the observable world that is seen by the eye **140** at any given moment.

Additionally, in some embodiments, the optics block **135** magnifies received light, corrects optical errors associated with the image light, and presents the corrected image light to the eye **140**. The optics block **135** may include one or more optical elements **155** in optical series. An optical element **155** may be an aperture, a Fresnel lens, a convex lens, a concave lens, a filter, a waveguide, a Pancharatnam-Berry phase (PBP) lens or grating, a color-selective filter, a waveplate, a C-plate, or any other suitable optical element **155** that affects the image light. Moreover, the optics block **135** may include combinations of different optical elements. One or more of the optical elements in the optics block **135** may have one or more coatings, such as anti-reflective coatings. In some embodiments, the optics block **135** may include optical elements of one or more of the foveated, peripheral, and/or foveal systems discussed in detail below in conjunction with FIGS. 4-11.

FIG. 2A is a diagram of an HMD **162** implemented as a NED, according to various embodiments. As shown, the HMD **162** is in the form of a pair of augmented reality glasses. The HMD **162** presents computer-generated media to a user and augments views of a physical, real-world environment with the computer-generated media. Examples of computer-generated media presented by the HMD **162** include one or more images, video, audio, or some combination thereof. In some embodiments, audio is presented via an external device (e.g., speakers and headphones) that receives audio information from the HMD **162**, a console (not shown), or both, and presents audio data based on audio information. In some embodiments, the HMD **162** may be modified to also operate as a VR HMD, a MR HMD, or some combination thereof. The HMD **162** includes a frame **175** and a display **164**. As shown, the frame **175** mounts the NED to the user's head, while the display **164** provides image light to the user. The display **164** may be customized to a variety of shapes and sizes to conform to different styles of eyeglass frames.

FIG. 2B is a cross-section view of the HMD **162** of FIG. 2A implemented as a NED, according to various embodiments. This view includes frame **175**, display **164** (which comprises a display assembly **180** and a display block **185**), and eye **170**. The display assembly **180** supplies image light to the eye **170**. The display assembly **180** houses display block **185**, which, in different embodiments, encloses the different types of imaging optics and redirection structures. For purposes of illustration, FIG. 2B shows the cross section associated with a single display block **185** and a single eye **170**, but in alternative embodiments not shown, another

display block, which is separate from display block **185** shown in FIG. 2B, provides image light to another eye of the user.

The display block **185**, as illustrated, is configured to combine light from a local area with light from computer generated image to form an augmented scene. The display block **185** is also configured to provide the augmented scene to the eyebox **165** corresponding to a location of the user's eye **170**. The display block **185** may include, for example, a waveguide display, a focusing assembly, a compensation assembly, or some combination thereof. In some embodiments, the display block **185** may include one or more components of the foveated, peripheral, and/or foveal systems discussed in detail below in conjunction with FIGS. 4-11.

HMD **162** may include one or more other optical elements between the display block **185** and the eye **170**. The optical elements may act to, for example, correct aberrations in image light emitted from the display block **185**, magnify image light emitted from the display block **185**, some other optical adjustment of image light emitted from the display block **185**, or some combination thereof. The example for optical elements may include an aperture, a Fresnel lens, a convex lens, a concave lens, a filter, or any other suitable optical element that affects image light. The display block **185** may also comprise one or more materials (e.g., plastic, glass, etc.) with one or more refractive indices that effectively minimize the weight and widen a field of view of the HMD **162**.

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of an embodiment of a near eye display system **300** in which a console **310** operates. In some embodiments, the NED system **300** corresponds to the NED **100** or the HMD **162**. The NED system **300** may operate in a VR system environment, an AR system environment, a MR system environment, or some combination thereof. The NED system **300** shown in FIG. 3 comprises a NED **305** and an input/output (I/O) interface **315** that is coupled to the console **310**.

While FIG. 3 shows an example NED system **300** including one NED **305** and one I/O interface **315**, in other embodiments any number of these components may be included in the NED system **300**. For example, there may be multiple NEDs **305** that each has an associated I/O interface **315**, where each NED **305** and I/O interface **315** communicates with the console **310**. In alternative configurations, different and/or additional components may be included in the NED system **300**. Additionally, various components included within the NED **305**, the console **310**, and the I/O interface **315** may be distributed in a different manner than is described in conjunction with FIG. 3 in some embodiments. For example, some or all of the functionality of the console **310** may be provided by the NED **305**.

The NED **305** may be a head-mounted display that presents content to a user. The content may include virtual and/or augmented views of a physical, real-world environment including computer-generated elements (e.g., two-dimensional or three-dimensional images, two-dimensional or three-dimensional video, sound, etc.). In some embodiments, the NED **305** may also present audio content to a user. The NED **305** and/or the console **310** may transmit the audio content to an external device via the I/O interface **315**. The external device may include various forms of speaker systems and/or headphones. In various embodiments, the audio content is synchronized with visual content being displayed by the NED **305**.

The NED **305** may comprise one or more rigid bodies, which may be rigidly or non-rigidly coupled together. A

rigid coupling between rigid bodies causes the coupled rigid bodies to act as a single rigid entity. In contrast, a non-rigid coupling between rigid bodies allows the rigid bodies to move relative to each other.

As shown in FIG. 3, the NED 305 may include a depth camera assembly (DCA) 320, a display 325, an optical assembly 330, one or more position sensors 335, an inertial measurement unit (IMU) 340, an eye tracking system 345, and a varifocal module 350. In some embodiments, the display 325 and the optical assembly 330 can be integrated together into a projection assembly. Various embodiments of the NED 305 may have additional, fewer, or different components than those listed above. Additionally, the functionality of each component may be partially or completely encompassed by the functionality of one or more other components in various embodiments.

The DCA 320 captures sensor data describing depth information of an area surrounding the NED 305. The sensor data may be generated by one or a combination of depth imaging techniques, such as triangulation, structured light imaging, time-of-flight imaging, laser scan, and so forth. The DCA 320 can compute various depth properties of the area surrounding the NED 305 using the sensor data. Additionally or alternatively, the DCA 320 may transmit the sensor data to the console 310 for processing.

The DCA 320 includes an illumination source, an imaging device, and a controller. The illumination source emits light onto an area surrounding the NED 305. In an embodiment, the emitted light is structured light. The illumination source includes a plurality of emitters that each emits light having certain characteristics (e.g., wavelength, polarization, coherence, temporal behavior, etc.). The characteristics may be the same or different between emitters, and the emitters can be operated simultaneously or individually. In one embodiment, the plurality of emitters could be, e.g., laser diodes (such as edge emitters), inorganic or organic light-emitting diodes (LEDs), a vertical-cavity surface-emitting laser (VCSEL), or some other source. In some embodiments, a single emitter or a plurality of emitters in the illumination source can emit light having a structured light pattern. The imaging device captures ambient light in the environment surrounding NED 305, in addition to light reflected off of objects in the environment that is generated by the plurality of emitters. In various embodiments, the imaging device may be an infrared camera or a camera configured to operate in a visible spectrum. The controller coordinates how the illumination source emits light and how the imaging device captures light. For example, the controller may determine a brightness of the emitted light. In some embodiments, the controller also analyzes detected light to detect objects in the environment and position information related to those objects.

The display 325 displays two-dimensional or three-dimensional images to the user in accordance with pixel data received from the console 310. In various embodiments, the display 325 comprises a single display or multiple displays (e.g., separate displays for each eye of a user). In some embodiments, the display 325 comprises a single or multiple waveguide displays. Light can be coupled into the single or multiple waveguide displays via, e.g., a liquid crystal display (LCD), an organic light emitting diode (OLED) display, an inorganic light emitting diode (ILED) display, an active-matrix organic light-emitting diode (AMOLED) display, a transparent organic light emitting diode (TOLED) display, a laser-based display, one or more waveguides, other types of displays, a scanner, a one-dimensional array, and so forth. In

addition, combinations of the displays types may be incorporated in display 325 and used separately, in parallel, and/or in combination.

The optical assembly 330 magnifies image light received from the display 325, corrects optical errors associated with the image light, and presents the corrected image light to a user of the NED 305. The optical assembly 330 includes a plurality of optical elements. For example, one or more of the following optical elements may be included in the optical assembly 330: an aperture, a Fresnel lens, a convex lens, a concave lens, a filter, a reflecting surface, or any other suitable optical element that deflects, reflects, refracts, and/or in some way alters image light. Moreover, the optical assembly 330 may include combinations of different optical elements. In some embodiments, one or more of the optical elements in the optical assembly 330 may have one or more coatings, such as partially reflective or antireflective coatings. The optical assembly 330 can be integrated into a projection assembly, e.g., a projection assembly. In one embodiment, the optical assembly 330 includes the optics block 155.

In operation, the optical assembly 330 magnifies and focuses image light generated by the display 325. In so doing, the optical assembly 330 enables the display 325 to be physically smaller, weigh less, and consume less power than displays that do not use the optical assembly 330. Additionally, magnification may increase the field of view of the content presented by the display 325. For example, in some embodiments, the field of view of the displayed content partially or completely uses a user's field of view. For example, the field of view of a displayed image may meet or exceed 310 degrees. In various embodiments, the amount of magnification may be adjusted by adding or removing optical elements.

In some embodiments, the optical assembly 330 may be designed to correct one or more types of optical errors. Examples of optical errors include barrel or pincushion distortions, longitudinal chromatic aberrations, or transverse chromatic aberrations. Other types of optical errors may further include spherical aberrations, chromatic aberrations or errors due to the lens field curvature, astigmatism, in addition to other types of optical errors. In some embodiments, visual content transmitted to the display 325 is pre-distorted, and the optical assembly 330 corrects the distortion as image light from the display 325 passes through various optical elements of the optical assembly 330. In some embodiments, optical elements of the optical assembly 330 are integrated into the display 325 as a projection assembly that includes at least one waveguide coupled with one or more optical elements. In some embodiments the display 325 and/or the optical assembly 330 may include the peripheral display systems or components thereof discussed below in conjunction with FIGS. 4-7.

The IMU 340 is an electronic device that generates data indicating a position of the NED 305 based on measurement signals received from one or more of the position sensors 335 and from depth information received from the DCA 320. In some embodiments of the NED 305, the IMU 340 may be a dedicated hardware component. In other embodiments, the IMU 340 may be a software component implemented in one or more processors.

In operation, a position sensor 335 generates one or more measurement signals in response to a motion of the NED 305. Examples of position sensors 335 include: one or more accelerometers, one or more gyroscopes, one or more magnetometers, one or more altimeters, one or more inclinometers, and/or various types of sensors for motion detection,

drift detection, and/or error detection. The position sensors **335** may be located external to the IMU **340**, internal to the IMU **340**, or some combination thereof.

Based on the one or more measurement signals from one or more position sensors **335**, the IMU **340** generates data indicating an estimated current position of the NED **305** relative to an initial position of the NED **305**. For example, the position sensors **335** may include multiple accelerometers to measure translational motion (forward/back, up/down, left/right) and multiple gyroscopes to measure rotational motion (e.g., pitch, yaw, and roll). In some embodiments, the IMU **340** rapidly samples the measurement signals and calculates the estimated current position of the NED **305** from the sampled data. For example, the IMU **340** may integrate the measurement signals received from the accelerometers over time to estimate a velocity vector and integrates the velocity vector over time to determine an estimated current position of a reference point on the NED **305**. Alternatively, the IMU **340** provides the sampled measurement signals to the console **310**, which analyzes the sample data to determine one or more measurement errors. The console **310** may further transmit one or more of control signals and/or measurement errors to the IMU **340** to configure the IMU **340** to correct and/or reduce one or more measurement errors (e.g., drift errors). The reference point is a point that may be used to describe the position of the NED **305**. The reference point may generally be defined as a point in space or a position related to a position and/or orientation of the NED **305**.

In various embodiments, the IMU **340** receives one or more parameters from the console **310**. The one or more parameters are used to maintain tracking of the NED **305**. Based on a received parameter, the IMU **340** may adjust one or more IMU parameters (e.g., a sample rate). In some embodiments, certain parameters cause the IMU **340** to update an initial position of the reference point so that it corresponds to a next position of the reference point. Updating the initial position of the reference point as the next calibrated position of the reference point helps reduce drift errors in detecting a current position estimate of the IMU **340**.

In some embodiments, the eye tracking system **345** is integrated into the NED **305**. The eye-tracking system **345** may comprise one or more illumination sources and an imaging device (camera). In operation, the eye tracking system **345** generates and analyzes tracking data related to a user's eyes as the user wears the NED **305**. The eye tracking system **345** may further generate eye tracking information that may comprise information about a position of the user's eye, i.e., information about an angle of an eye-gaze.

In some embodiments, the varifocal module **350** is further integrated into the NED **305**. The varifocal module **350** may be communicatively coupled to the eye tracking system **345** in order to enable the varifocal module **350** to receive eye tracking information from the eye tracking system **345**. The varifocal module **350** may further modify the focus of image light emitted from the display **325** based on the eye tracking information received from the eye tracking system **345**. Accordingly, the varifocal module **350** can reduce vergence-accommodation conflict that may be produced as the user's eyes resolve the image light. In various embodiments, the varifocal module **350** can be interfaced (e.g., either mechanically or electrically) with at least one optical element of the optical assembly **330**.

In operation, the varifocal module **350** may adjust the position and/or orientation of one or more optical elements

in the optical assembly **330** in order to adjust the focus of image light propagating through the optical assembly **330**. In various embodiments, the varifocal module **350** may use eye tracking information obtained from the eye tracking system **345** to determine how to adjust one or more optical elements in the optical assembly **330**. In some embodiments, the varifocal module **350** may perform foveated rendering of the image light based on the eye tracking information obtained from the eye tracking system **345** in order to adjust the resolution of the image light emitted by the display **325**. In this case, the varifocal module **350** configures the display **325** to display a high pixel density in a foveal region of the user's eye-gaze and a low pixel density in other regions of the user's eye-gaze. In some embodiments, the varifocal module **350** may include the foveal display systems or components thereof that are discussed below in conjunction with FIGS. **4-5** and **8-11**.

The I/O interface **315** facilitates the transfer of action requests from a user to the console **310**. In addition, the I/O interface **315** facilitates the transfer of device feedback from the console **310** to the user. An action request is a request to perform a particular action. For example, an action request may be an instruction to start or end capture of image or video data or an instruction to perform a particular action within an application, such as pausing video playback, increasing or decreasing the volume of audio playback, and so forth. In various embodiments, the I/O interface **315** may include one or more input devices. Example input devices include: a keyboard, a mouse, a game controller, a joystick, and/or any other suitable device for receiving action requests and communicating the action requests to the console **310**. In some embodiments, the I/O interface **315** includes an IMU **340** that captures calibration data indicating an estimated current position of the I/O interface **315** relative to an initial position of the I/O interface **315**.

In operation, the I/O interface **315** receives action requests from the user and transmits those action requests to the console **310**. Responsive to receiving the action request, the console **310** performs a corresponding action. For example, responsive to receiving an action request, the console **310** may configure the I/O interface **315** to emit haptic feedback onto an arm of the user. For example, the console **315** may configure the I/O interface **315** to deliver haptic feedback to a user when an action request is received. Additionally or alternatively, the console **310** may configure the I/O interface **315** to generate haptic feedback when the console **310** performs an action, responsive to receiving an action request.

The console **310** provides content to the NED **305** for processing in accordance with information received from one or more of: the DCA **320**, the NED **305**, and the I/O interface **315**. As shown in FIG. **3**, the console **310** includes an application store **355**, a tracking module **360**, and an engine **365**. In some embodiments, the console **310** may have additional, fewer, or different modules and/or components than those described in conjunction with FIG. **3**. Similarly, the functions further described below may be distributed among components of the console **310** in a different manner than described in conjunction with FIG. **3**.

The application store **355** stores one or more applications for execution by the console **310**. An application is a group of instructions that, when executed by a processor, performs a particular set of functions, such as generating content for presentation to the user. For example, an application may generate content in response to receiving inputs from a user (e.g., via movement of the NED **305** as the user moves his/her head, via the I/O interface **315**, etc.). Examples of

applications include: gaming applications, conferencing applications, video playback applications, or other suitable applications.

The tracking module 360 calibrates the NED system 300 using one or more calibration parameters. The tracking module 360 may further adjust one or more calibration parameters to reduce error in determining a position and/or orientation of the NED 305 or the I/O interface 315. For example, the tracking module 360 may transmit a calibration parameter to the DCA 320 in order to adjust the focus of the DCA 320. Accordingly, the DCA 320 may more accurately determine positions of structured light elements reflecting off of objects in the environment. The tracking module 360 may also analyze sensor data generated by the IMU 340 in determining various calibration parameters to modify. Further, in some embodiments, if the NED 305 loses tracking of the user's eye, then the tracking module 360 may recalibrate some or all of the components in the NED system 300. For example, if the DCA 320 loses line of sight of at least a threshold number of structured light elements projected onto the user's eye, the tracking module 360 may transmit calibration parameters to the varifocal module 350 in order to re-establish eye tracking.

The tracking module 360 tracks the movements of the NED 305 and/or of the I/O interface 315 using information from the DCA 320, the one or more position sensors 335, the IMU 340 or some combination thereof. For example, the tracking module 360 may determine a reference position of the NED 305 from a mapping of an area local to the NED 305. The tracking module 360 may generate this mapping based on information received from the NED 305 itself. The tracking module 360 may also utilize sensor data from the IMU 340 and/or depth data from the DCA 320 to determine reference positions for the NED 305 and/or I/O interface 315. In various embodiments, the tracking module 360 generates an estimation and/or prediction for a subsequent position of the NED 305 and/or the I/O interface 315. The tracking module 360 may transmit the predicted subsequent position to the engine 365.

The engine 365 generates a three-dimensional mapping of the area surrounding the NED 305 (i.e., the "local area") based on information received from the NED 305. In some embodiments, the engine 365 determines depth information for the three-dimensional mapping of the local area based on depth data received from the DCA 320 (e.g., depth information of objects in the local area). In some embodiments, the engine 365 calculates a depth and/or position of the NED 305 by using depth data generated by the DCA 320. In particular, the engine 365 may implement various techniques for calculating the depth and/or position of the NED 305, such as stereo based techniques, structured light illumination techniques, time-of-flight techniques, and so forth. In various embodiments, the engine 365 uses depth data received from the DCA 320 to update a model of the local area and to generate and/or modify media content based in part on the updated model.

The engine 365 also executes applications within the NED system 300 and receives position information, acceleration information, velocity information, predicted future positions, or some combination thereof, of the NED 305 from the tracking module 360. Based on the received information, the engine 365 determines various forms of media content to transmit to the NED 305 for presentation to the user. For example, if the received information indicates that the user has looked to the left, the engine 365 generates media content for the NED 305 that mirrors the user's movement in a virtual environment or in an environ-

ment augmenting the local area with additional media content. Accordingly, the engine 365 may generate and/or modify media content (e.g., visual and/or audio content) for presentation to the user. The engine 365 may further transmit the media content to the NED 305. Additionally, in response to receiving an action request from the I/O interface 315, the engine 365 may perform an action within an application executing on the console 310. The engine 305 may further provide feedback when the action is performed. For example, the engine 365 may configure the NED 305 to generate visual and/or audio feedback and/or the I/O interface 315 to generate haptic feedback to the user.

In some embodiments, based on the eye tracking information (e.g., orientation of the user's eye) received from the eye tracking system 345, the engine 365 determines a resolution of the media content provided to the NED 305 for presentation to the user on the display 325. The engine 365 may adjust a resolution of the visual content provided to the NED 305 by configuring the display 325 to perform foveated rendering of the visual content, based at least in part on a direction of the user's gaze received from the eye tracking system 345. The engine 365 provides the content to the NED 305 having a high resolution on the display 325 in a foveal region of the user's gaze and a low resolution in other regions, thereby reducing the power consumption of the NED 305. In addition, using foveated rendering reduces a number of computing cycles used in rendering visual content without compromising the quality of the user's visual experience. In some embodiments, the engine 365 can further use the eye tracking information to adjust a focus of the image light emitted from the display 325 in order to reduce vergence-accommodation conflicts. In some embodiments, the engine 365 may interoperate with one or more of the foveated, peripheral, and/or foveal systems, or components thereof, that are discussed in detail below in conjunction with FIGS. 4-11.

Foveated Display System

FIG. 4 is a schematic diagram illustrating a foveated display system 400, according to various embodiments. As shown, the foveated display system 400 includes a peripheral display module 402 and a foveal display module 410. For purposes of illustration, FIGS. 4-11 show a single foveated display system and components thereof that provide image light to one eye of a user. In some embodiments not shown, another separate foveated display system may provide image light to another eye of the user.

In operation, the foveated display system 400 is configured to generate high-resolution virtual imagery via foveated rendering for a foveal region of a user's eye gaze, as well as low-resolution, large field of view (FOV) background imagery for other regions of the user's eye gaze. In particular, the foveal display module 410 is configured to generate the high-resolution virtual imagery, while the peripheral display module 402 is configured to generate the low-resolution, large FOV background imagery. In addition, the peripheral and foveal display modules 402 and 410 are configured to permit real-world light to pass through and be observed by the user.

As shown, the peripheral display module 402 includes a projection device 404, a diffuser 406, and a pancake lens 408. The foveal display module 410 includes a holographic display 412, a beam-steering device 414, an angular- and wavelength-selective lens 416, and an eye-tracking module 418. Illustratively, the diffuser 406 and the angular- and wavelength-selective lens 416 are in-line with one another.

That is, the diffuser **406** and the angular- and wavelength-selective lens **416** share a common axis.

In operation, the projection device **404** emits polarized light corresponding to generated imagery. As shown, the polarized light is projected at a slanted angle onto the diffuser **406**, which reflects and diffuses such light due to polarization and angular selectivity characteristics of the diffuser **406**. In some embodiments, the diffuser **406** may be polarization, angular, and wavelength selective. In such cases, the diffuser **406** may permit most light to pass through, but diffuse light having a particular handedness of polarization that is within a particular range of wavelengths and incident on the diffuser **406** within a particular range of angles. More generally, any technically-feasible diffuser may be used that is able to diffuse light from the projection device **404** that is projected thereon while permitting other light (e.g., real-world light) to pass through.

Light diffused by the diffuser **406** provides low-resolution, high FOV background imagery for the non-foveal regions of a user's eye gaze. In addition, real-world light, i.e., light from a real-world scene, that is incident on the diffuser **406** passes through the diffuser **406** without being diffused due to the polarization, angular, and wavelength selectivity characteristics of the diffuser **406**. As a result, the user can observe both the low-resolution, high FOV background imagery generated using the diffuser **406** and real-world content.

As shown, light diffused by the diffuser **406** is passed through the pancake lens **408**. A pancake lens is a folded optic in which light that enters reflects, or "bounces," through multiple times before exiting. The multiple bounces increase the propagation distance of light, which can in turn increase the perceived distance of imagery from a user and/or magnify the imagery. By increase the propagating distance of light, the pancake lens **408** causes the low-resolution, high FOV background imagery generated via the diffuser **406** to appear further away from a user. Illustratively, the pancake lens **408** also has focal power, which can make the low-resolution, high FOV background imagery appear even further away. Although a pancake lens is described herein as a reference example, in other embodiments, any technically-feasible optical element(s) may be used to increase the propagating distance of light or otherwise increase the perceived distance of imagery from a user and/or magnify the imagery.

Although shown as distinct components for illustrative purposes, in some embodiments the diffuser **406** may be included within the pancake lens **408**. Such embodiments are discussed in greater detail below in conjunction with FIGS. 6-7. That is, the diffuser **406** may generally be included within, or be external to, the pancake lens **408**. Configurations in which the diffuser **406** is included within the pancake lens **408** are more compact than configurations in which the diffuser **406** is distinct from the pancake lens **408**. Such compactness can be beneficial for applications with a HMD or other devices where a small form factor and weight are considerations.

As shown, light that has passed through the pancake lens **408** further passes through the angular- and wavelength-selective lens **416** of the foveal display module **410** toward an eye box. In some embodiments, the angular- and wavelength-selective lens **416** also has focal power. In operation, such an angular- and wavelength-selective lens **416** may allow through most light, including the light that has passed through the pancake lens **408**, while reflecting and focusing light that is within a particular range of wavelengths and incident on the lens **416** within a particular range of angles,

including light from the holographic display **412** that is steered onto the angular- and wavelength-selective lens **416** by the beam-steering device **414**.

As shown, the beam-steering device **414** is a beam-steering mirror. The beam-steering mirror **414** is configured to perform gaze-following steering in which the beam-steering mirror **414** steers light from the holographic display **412** toward a foveal region of a user's eye gaze via the angular- and wavelength-selective lens **416**, thereby producing high-resolution virtual imagery that can be observed by the user. In some embodiments, the beam-steering mirror **414** may be a microelectro-mechanical system (MEMS) mirror. Although such a MEMS mirror is described herein as a reference example, in other embodiments, any technically-feasible device may be used to steer light toward a foveal region of a user's eye gaze.

As shown, the angular- and wavelength-selective lens **416** reflects light from the holographic display **412** that is focused onto the lens **416** at various angles by the beam-steering mirror **414**, due to the wavelength and angular selectivity characteristics of the lens **416**. In some embodiments, the angular- and wavelength-selective lens **416** may be a holographic optical element (HOE), such as a volume grating lens. A HOE is an optical element produced using holographic imaging processes or principles. Although discussed herein primarily with respect to a HOE for illustrative purposes, any optical element(s) that perform functionalities of the angular- and wavelength-selective lens **416** described herein may be used in other embodiments.

The holographic display **412** is a display that uses light diffraction to create a virtual image. In some embodiments, the holographic display **412** may include a spatial light modulator that is configured to modulate light emitted by a projection device. Further, light produced by the holographic display **412** may be within a wavelength range that is reflected by the angular- and wavelength-selective lens **416** when incident thereon within a particular range of angles. Although discussed herein primarily with respect to a holographic display for illustrative purposes, in other embodiments, any technically-feasible display device(s) capable of generating light that can be focused on a foveal region of a user's eye gaze to produce high-resolution imagery may be used.

As the foregoing illustrates, a user of the foveated display system **400** can observe AR content that includes (1) high-resolution virtual imagery focused on a foveal region of the user's eye gaze by the foveal display module **410**, (2) low resolution, high FOV background imagery produced by the peripheral display module **402**, and (3) content from a real-world scene. Although AR is described herein as a reference example, it should be understood that the foveated display system **400** may also be used in other artificial reality applications, such as VR, MR, hybrid reality, or some combination and/or derivative thereof. For example, in the case of VR, real-world light would not be included in the output of the foveated display system **400**.

FIG. 5 illustrates in greater detail components of a foveated display system **500**, according to various embodiments. As shown, the foveated display system **500** includes a peripheral display module **502** and a foveal display module **512**, which correspond to the peripheral display module **402** and the foveal display module **410**, respectively, that are described above in conjunction with FIG. 4. In operation, the foveal display module **512** is configured to generate high-resolution virtual imagery via foveated rendering for a foveal region of a user's eye gaze, while the peripheral

display module **502** is configured to generate low-resolution, large FOV background imagery for other regions of the user's eye gaze.

As shown, the peripheral display module **502** includes a projection device **502**, which may comprise any technically-feasible light source, such as a light-emitting diode (LED) device, an organic LED (OLED), a laser, etc. In some embodiments, the projection device **502** may be a pico projector.

The peripheral display module **502** further includes a condenser **506** that is configured to render a divergent light beam from the projection device **502** into a parallel beam that is projected onto a diffuser **508**. The diffuser **508** is a polarization, angular, and wavelength selective diffuser, similar to the diffuser **406** described above in conjunction with FIG. 4. A diffuser having characteristics of the diffuser **508** described herein, including polarization, angular, and wavelength selectivity, may be constructed using cholesteric liquid crystal materials. In some embodiments, the diffuser **508** may be a volume grating lens constructed using a cholesteric liquid crystal material. More generally, any technically feasible material(s) may be used to construct the diffuser **508**.

Similar to the discussion above in conjunction with FIG. 4, the projection device **502** emits polarized light associated with generated imagery that is projected, via the condenser **506**, onto the diffuser **508** at a slanted angle. Due to the polarization and angular selectivity characteristics of the diffuser **508**, the diffuser **508** is configured to reflect and diffuse the projected light toward an eye box. Such diffusion produces low-resolution, high FOV background imagery for non-foveal regions of a user's eye gaze.

As described, the polarization and angular selectivity characteristics of the diffuser **508** cause the diffuser **508** to only diffuse or scatter light having a particular handedness of polarization that is incident on the diffuser **508** within a particular range of angles. For example, in a particular embodiment, the diffuser **508** could selectively diffuse light that has one handedness of polarization and is incident on the diffuser **508** at an angle into 40°, while permitting other light to pass through without being diffused. In some embodiments, the diffuser **508** is configured to diffuse right-circularly polarized (RCP) light that is incident thereon within a particular range of angles. In such cases, the diffuser **508** may permit light that is left-circularly polarized (LCP) and/or incident on the diffuser **508** at other angles (e.g., 0 degrees) to pass through without being diffused, though some attenuation of the light may occur. Although light having particular handedness of polarization and incident on optical elements at particular angle(s) are described herein for illustrative purposes, in other embodiments light that has any handedness of polarization and/or is incident on optical elements within any technically feasible range(s) of angles, may be used. For example, in some embodiments the diffuser **508** may instead be configured to diffuse LCP light incident on the diffuser **508** within a particular range of angles and permit light that is RCP and/or incident on the diffuser **508** at other angles to pass through without being diffused.

As shown, the diffuser **508** is transparent to light from a real-world scene behind the diffuser **508**. As a result, a user (wearing, e.g., a HMD that includes the foveated display system **400**) can observe objects in the real-world scene in addition to generated content that is diffused by the diffuser **508** (and generated content that is focused on a foveal region of the user's eye gaze by the foveal display module **512**, as discussed in greater detail below). Although optical ele-

ments are sometimes described herein as being transparent, it should be understood that some attenuation of light may occur as the light passes through "transparent" optical elements.

As shown, the diffused imagery that is produced by the diffuser **508** is further passed through a pancake lens **510**, which corresponds to the pancake lens **408** and is configured to increase a propagating distance of light, thereby causing the diffused imagery to appear further away to a user. In some embodiments, the diffuser **508** may be included within the pancake lens **510**, rather than being external to the pancake lens **510** as shown in FIG. 5. Such embodiments can be relatively compact and are discussed in greater detail below in conjunction with FIGS. 6-7.

Turning now to the foveal display module **512**, as shown, the foveal display module includes a projection device **514** and a spatial light modulator (SLM) **516**. In some embodiments, the SLM **516** is configured to modulate light incident thereon to provide a holographic display. In such cases, an application (e.g., one of the applications stored in the application store **355**) or engine (e.g., the engine **365**) may determine modulation(s) to light emitted by the projection device **514** required to generate virtual imagery and control the SLM **516** accordingly. In addition, light modulated by the SLM **516** may be focused onto the MEMS mirror **524** via a concave mirror **520** and one or more beam splitters (e.g., beam splitter **522**).

In operation, an eye tracking module **528** is configured to track the pupil position of a user's eye. For example, in some embodiments, an application (e.g., one of the applications stored in the application store **355**) or engine (e.g., the engine **365**) may analyze tracking data related to the user's eye that is generated using one or more illumination sources and an imaging device (camera) included in a NED or HMD that is worn by the user, as described above in conjunction with FIG. 3.

The MEMS mirror **524** is controllable to steer light that has been reflected by the concave mirror **520** onto the MEMS mirror **524**, based on a pupil position detected by the eye tracking module **528**. That is, the MEMS mirror **524** may be controlled to perform gaze-following steering. In particular, the MEMS mirror **524** may be steered such that high-resolution imagery is reflected and focused by a HOE **526** so as to pass through a foveal region of the user's eye gaze corresponding to the detected pupil position. For example, the MEMS mirror **524** could be steered such that most light rays reflected by the MEMS mirror **524** pass through the user's pupil to provide appropriate gaze-direction views. In some embodiments, the MEMS mirror **524** may be steerable in three-directions to provide different fields of view that follow the user gaze direction.

In some embodiments, the foveal display module **512** may further include a switchable PBP grating stack that increases a steering range of the MEMS mirror **524**, as discussed in greater detail below in conjunction with FIGS. 7-8. As used herein, the "steering range" of the MEMS mirror **524** refers to a range of angles through which the MEMS mirror **524** can steer light that is incident thereon. It should be understood that the steering range of the MEMS mirror **524** is limited by the tilt angle of the MEMS mirror **524**, i.e., the angle at which the MEMS mirror **524** can be mechanically deflected. In some cases, a limited steering range of the MEMS mirror **524** may need to be extended to cover the entire field of view that is visible to an eye of a user. A switchable PBP grating stack may be used to increase the steering range of the MEMS mirror **524** in some embodiments. It should be understood, however, that the switchable

PBP grating stack may be unnecessary if the MEMS mirror **524** has sufficient steering range for the relevant application.

As described, the HOE **526** is a lens having focal power and is further polarization, angular, and wavelength selective in some embodiments. In such cases, the HOE **526** may pass through most light, including light for the low-resolution, high FOV background imagery generated by the peripheral display module **502**, as well as real-world light. At the same time, the HOE **526** is configured to reflect and focus light from the MEMS mirror **524** having particular wavelengths and incident on the HOE **526** within a particular range of angles toward a foveal region of a user's eye gaze. As a result, the user can observe high-resolution virtual imagery that is generated by the foveal display module **512** and focused onto the foveal region of the user's eye gaze, as well as low-resolution, large FOV background imagery generated by the peripheral display module **502** and real-world light that has passed through optical elements of the peripheral display module **502** and the foveal display module **512**.

Although specific optical elements and devices are discussed herein as reference examples, in alternative embodiments any other technically-feasible types of optical elements and/or devices that are capable of performing the functionalities of the optical elements and/or devices disclosed herein may be used. In some embodiments, the foveated display systems **400** and **500** may also include other optical elements that are not shown. For example, the foveated display system **400** or **500** may include a combiner that is configured to combine real-world light with light that has been diffused and reflected by the diffuser **406** or the diffuser **510**, respectively.

In some embodiments, each of the foveated display systems **400** and **500** may be included in a NED or HMD, such as the NEDs **100** or **300**, or the HMD **162**, described above in conjunction with FIGS. **1-3**. In other embodiments, each of the foveated display systems **400** and **500** may include or be implemented in conjunction with an artificial reality system on any technically feasible platform, such as a mobile device, a computing system, or any other hardware platform capable of providing artificial reality content to one or more users.

Pancake Lens Including Diffuser

FIG. **6** is a schematic diagram illustrating a pancake lens **600** that includes a diffuser, according to various embodiments. As described, a pancake lens is a folded optic in which light that enters reflects, or "bounces," through multiple times before exiting. Illustratively, light bounces twice through the pancake lens **600**. The multiple bounces increase the propagation distance of light, which can in turn increase the perceived distance of imagery from a viewer and/or magnify the imagery.

As shown, the pancake lens **600** includes a polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602**, a half-wave plate **604**, a diffuser **606**, and a half mirror **608**. All or some of the components of the pancake lens **600** may be in physical contact with one another, share a substrate with one another, laminated with one another, optically in contact with one another, have index matching fluid or optical glue between one another, and/or may have space therebetween. For example, all or some of the some of the components of the pancake lens **600** could be the surfaces of lenses.

The polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602** is configured to selectively reflect one or more handedness of polarization of light that is incident on the mirror **602** within

one or more ranges of angles, while allowing through other light. In some embodiments, the polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602** may selectively allow through LCP light that is incident on the mirror **602** within a particular range of angles and RCP light that is incident on the mirror **602** at 0° , while reflecting LCP light that is incident on the mirror **602** at 0° , as discussed in greater detail below in conjunction with FIG. **7**. Further, the polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602** maintains the polarization of reflected light, like a Bragg reflector. In some embodiments, the polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602** may be a volume grating mirror constructed from a liquid crystal material having polarization selectivity. More generally, the polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602** may be constructed from any technically-feasible material(s).

In contrast to the polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602**, the half mirror **608** is a simple meta-mirror that does not maintain the handedness of reflected light. In particular, the half mirror **608** is configured to allow through one handedness of polarization of light while reflecting the other handedness of polarization. In addition, the handedness of polarization of light reflected by the half mirror **608** is converted to the opposite handedness. For example, in some embodiments, the half mirror **608** may allow through LCP light while reflecting RCP light as LCP light, as discussed in greater detail below in conjunction with FIG. **7**.

The half-wave plate **604** is configured to retard one linear component of light relative to the other component by 180° . As a result, the half-wave plate **604** converts the handedness of polarization of light incident thereon into the other handedness of polarization. For example, the half-wave plate **604** could convert LCP light into RCP light, and vice versa.

The diffuser **606** is similar to the diffusers **406** and **508** described above in conjunction with FIGS. **4** and **5**, respectively, in some embodiments. In such cases, the diffuser **606** may be polarization, angular, and wavelength selective. For example, the diffuser **606** could be configured to diffuse RCP light from a projector that is incident thereon within a particular range of angles while allowing through other light, as discussed in greater detail below in conjunction with FIG. **7**.

As shown, the diffuser **606** is disposed between the half-wave plate **604** and the half mirror **608** within the pancake lens **600**. An optical system in which the diffuser **606** is included within the pancake lens **600** is more compact than systems having a diffuser that is external to a pancake lens, which can be beneficial for applications with a HMD or other devices where a small form factor and weight are considerations.

FIG. **7** is a ray-tracing diagram illustrating operation of the pancake lens **600** that includes the diffuser **606**, according to various embodiments. As shown, LCP light (from, e.g., the projection device **404** or **504**) enters the pancake lens **600** at a slanted angle via the polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602**. Illustratively, the polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602** is configured to allow through LCP light that is incident on the mirror **602** within a range of angles in some embodiments. In addition, the polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602** is configured to allow other light to pass through.

As shown, the LCP light that is incident on the polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602** at an angle passes through the mirror **602**, which is configured to selectively allow through LCP light that is incident on the mirror **602** within a particular range of angles and RCP light that is incident on the mirror **602** at 0° , while reflecting LCP light

that is incident on the mirror **602** at 0° . The LCP light that has passed through the polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602** is then incident on the half-wave plate **604**, which converts the LCP light to RCP light.

As shown, the RCP light produced by the half-wave plate **604** is incident on the diffuser **606** at a slanted angle. In some embodiments, the diffuser **606** is configured to diffuse or scatter such RCP light that is incident on the diffuser **606** within a range of angles. In addition, the diffuser **606** is configured to permit light that is LCP and/or incident on the diffuser **606** at other angles (e.g., 0 degrees) to pass through without being diffused, although some attenuation of the light may occur.

As shown, diffused light that is produced by the diffuser **606** is RCP and reflects off of the diffuser **606** at 0° while maintaining its handedness of polarization. The reflected RCP light passes through the half-wave plate **604** again, which converts the RCP light to LCP light. The LCP light is then incident on the polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602**, which completes one bounce through the pancake lens **600**.

A second bounce through the pancake lens **600** begins when the LCP light is reflected by the polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602**. As shown, the polarization- and angular-selective mirror **602** maintains the handedness of the reflected light, which is LCP. The reflected LCP light passes through the half-wave plate **604** and is converted to RCP light. The RCP light then passes through the diffuser **606** again, while maintaining its handedness of polarization and not being diffused. Thereafter, the RCP light that has passed through the diffuser **606** is reflected by the half mirror **608**.

As described, the half mirror **608** is a simple meta-mirror that does not maintain the handedness of reflected light. As shown, RCP light that is incident on the half mirror **608** is reflected as LCP light. In some embodiments, the half mirror **608** may be a concave half mirror with focal power that can be used to make imagery appear at a further distance. As shown, some light passes through the half mirror **608** and is lost to the outside. However, the percentage of light that is lost may be relatively small in embodiments (e.g., approximately one percent).

As shown, the LCP light that is reflected by the half mirror **608** passes through the diffuser **606** again, without being diffused, and is then converted by the half-wave plate **604** to RCP light. Thereafter, the RCP light passes through the mirror **602**, which is configured to allow through such RCP light, and exits the pancake lens **600** towards an eyebox.

As further shown, real-world light that is LCP passes directly through the pancake lens **600**. In operation, the half mirror **608** separates real-world light that is incident thereon into a LCP component that is passed through the half mirror **608** and a RCP component that is reflected by the half mirror **608**. In some embodiments, a circular polarizer (not shown) may be used to selectively allow through a LCP component of real-world light before the LCP component is incident on the half mirror **608**.

As shown, the LCP real-world light that has passed through the half mirror **608** passes through the diffuser **606**, while maintaining its handedness of polarization and not being diffused. Thereafter, the LCP real-world light passes through the half-wave plate and is converted by the half-wave plate **624** to RCP light. The RCP light then passes through the mirror **602** and exits the pancake lens **600** towards an eyebox.

As described, a pancake lens that includes a diffuser is a more compact design than one in which the diffuser and the

pancake lens are distinct. As a result, a system that requires a diffuser and a pancake lens (e.g., the peripheral display modules **402** or **502**, or the foveated display systems **400** and or **500**) can have a relatively compact construction. Such compactness can be beneficial for applications with a HMD or other devices where a small form factor and weight are considerations. In addition, the pancake lens **600** may produce relatively little cross-talk, due to the angular selectivity of the diffuser **606**, or expected light reduction.

Although specific optical elements of the pancake lenses **600** are discussed herein as reference examples, in alternative embodiments any other technically-feasible types of optical elements that are capable of performing the functionalities of the optical elements disclosed herein may be used.

Foveal Display System with Switchable PBP Grating Stack

FIG. **8** is a schematic diagram illustrating an optical configuration of components of the foveal display module **512** of FIG. **5**, according to various embodiments. Although described with respect to the foveal display module **512** of FIG. **5** as an illustrative example, the optical configuration of FIG. **8** is also applicable to other foveal display systems such as the foveal display module **410** of FIG. **4**.

As shown, the foveal display module **512** includes the SLM **516**, the concave mirror **520**, the MEMS mirror **524**, and the HOE **526**, which are described above in conjunction with FIG. **5**. Although light is shown as passing through the MEMS mirror **524** for illustrative purposes, it should be understood that light is actually reflected by the MEMS mirror **524**. As described, the SLM **516** included in the foveal display system provides a holographic display, and light from the holographic display can be focused on a foveal region of a user's eye gaze. In particular, responsive to detected changes in pupil position corresponding to the foveal region location, the MEMS mirror **524** can be controlled to steer light from the holographic display at particular angle(s). In particular, the MEMS mirrors **420** may steer most light rays from the holographic display such that those light rays reflect off of the HOE **526** and pass through the detected pupil position. As a result, the foveal display module **512** can generate appropriate gaze-direction views.

As shown, the foveal display module **512** further includes an optional switchable PBP grating stack **802**. The switchable PBP grating stack **802** is disposed before the MEMS mirror **524** in the light path. The switchable PBP grating stack **802** is configured to extend the steering range of the MEMS mirror **524**. In some embodiments, the switchable PBP grating stack **802** may double the steering range of the MEMS mirror **524**. For example, if the horizontal steering range of the MEMS mirror **524** is $\pm 15^\circ$ without active PBP grating elements, then the horizontal steering range could be extended to $\pm 30^\circ$ with active PBP elements. Assuming the vertical steering range is $\pm 10^\circ$ without active PBP elements, then the overall dynamic field of view could be $75^\circ \times 35^\circ$, with a diagonal of 79° . Although described herein for simplicity with respect to a switchable PBP stack that extends the steering range of the MEMS mirror **524** along one direction (e.g., horizontally), in some embodiments a foveal display module may also include another switchable PBP stack that extends the steering range of the MEMS mirror **524** along a perpendicular direction (e.g., vertically). Continuing the example from above, a vertical steering

range of $\pm 10^\circ$ could be doubled to $\pm 20^\circ$ using such a switchable PBP stack that extends the vertical steering range.

FIG. 9 illustrates in greater detail components of the foveal display module 512, according to various embodiments. Although described with respect to the foveal display module 512 of FIG. 5 as an illustrative example, components shown in FIG. 9 may also be included in other foveal display systems such as the foveal display module 410 of FIG. 4.

As shown, the foveal display module 512 includes the SLM 516 that provides a holographic display. The foveal display module 512 further includes the beam splitter 506 that, together with another beam splitter 902 and a concave mirror (not shown), focus light from the SLM 516 towards the switchable PBP grating stack 802 and the MEMS mirror 524.

As shown, the switchable PBP grating stack 802 is disposed before the MEMS mirror 524 in the light path. In operation, the switchable PBP grating stack 802 and the MEMS mirror 524 are used to steer light, via the HOE 526, towards a pupil position corresponding to the foveal region of a user's eye gaze, which is shown as region 904 in FIG. 9. As shown, light is steered by the MEMS mirror 524 towards the HOE 526 at an angle that is determined based on pupil position (which is tracked by the eye tracker 528). The steered light that is incident on the HOE 526 is reflected and focused by the HOE 526 towards the pupil 904, due to angular- and wavelength-selectivity characteristics of the HOE 526. Due to the same angular and wavelength selectivity characteristics, light for low-resolution, high FOV background imagery generated by the peripheral display module 502, as well as real-world light, may pass through the HOE 526.

FIG. 10 illustrates components and operation of the switchable PBP grating stack 802 of FIG. 8, according to various embodiments. As shown in panel A, the switchable PBP grating stack 802 includes two PBP gratings 1002 and 1006, as well as a switchable half-wave plate 1004 that is disposed between the PBP gratings 1002 and 1006. All or some of the components of the switchable PBP grating stack 802 may be in physical contact with one another, share a substrate with one another, laminated with one another, optically in contact with one another, have index matching fluid or optical glue between one another, and/or may have space therebetween. For example, all or some of the components of the PBP grating stack 802 could be the surfaces of lenses.

As discussed in greater detail below with respect to FIG. 11, each of the PBP gratings 1002 and 1006 has three possible states, depending on a handedness of polarization of light that is incident on the PBP grating 1002 or 1006 and the strength of an electric field that is applied (or not) to the PBP grating 1002 or 1006. The PBP gratings 1002 and 1006 diffract light differently in each of the three states. As a result, light that is incident on the PBP gratings 1002 and 1006 can be redirected at different angles depending on the states that the PBP gratings 1002 and 1006 are in.

The switchable half-wave plate 1004 has two possible states, an on state and an off state. When the switchable half-wave plate 1004 is in the off state, the switchable half-wave plate 1004 allows light to pass through unimpeded. That is, the switchable half-wave plate 1004 acts like glass, without any characteristics, in the off state. In the on state, the switchable half-wave plate 1004 acts as a half-wave plate that retards one linear component of light relative to the other component by 180° . In the on state, the swit-

chable half-wave plate 1004 converts LCP light that is incident thereon into RCP light, and vice versa.

As shown in panel A, the PBP gratings 1002 and 1006 are configured such that diffraction angles produced by the PBP gratings 1002 and 1006 cancel when the switchable half-wave plate 1004 is in the off state. As a result, the propagating direction of light passing through the switchable PBP grating stack 802 remains unchanged when the switchable half-wave plate 1004 (and the overall switchable PBP stack 802) is in the off state.

As shown in panel B, the PBP gratings 1002 and 1006 are further configured such that diffraction angles produced by the PBP gratings 1002 and 1006 add together when the switchable half-wave plate 1004 is in the on state. As a result, the propagating direction of light that passes through the switchable PBP grating stack 802 is changed when the switchable half-wave plate 1004 (and the overall switchable PBP stack 802) is in the on state.

The difference in diffraction angles between panels A and B is due to the different states of the PBP grating 1006, which is in turn caused by the different handedness of polarization of light output by the switchable half-wave plate 1004 when the switchable half-wave plate 1004 is in the on state versus the off state. As a result of the different diffraction angles, the switchable PBP grating stack 802 can be controlled to steer a beam of light incident thereon by turning the switchable half-wave plate 1004 (and the overall switchable PBP stack 802) on or off, as appropriate. Further, the steering range provided by the switchable PBP grating stack 802 can be used to increase the steering range of a beam-steering device such as the MEMS mirror 524 (by, e.g., a factor of 2), as described above in conjunction with FIGS. 8-9.

Although specific optical elements of the PBP grating stack 800 are discussed herein as reference examples, in alternative embodiments any other technically-feasible types of optical elements that are capable of performing the functionalities of the optical elements disclosed herein may be used.

FIG. 11 illustrates a PBP grating 1100, according to various embodiments. In some embodiments, the PBP grating 1100 may be one of the PBP gratings 1002 and 1006 described above in conjunction with FIG. 8. Mutually orthogonal x and y-axes 1110 are illustrated for reference. The z-axis, not illustrated, is perpendicular to the x-y plane and along an optical axis of the grating 1100.

As shown, the grating 1100 includes uniaxial fast axis 1120 of LC or meta structure that are oriented in a linearly repetitive pattern. In FIG. 11, the orientations of the fast axes are illustrated as short line segments aligned so as to schematically represent orientations of the LCs or the meta structure. For example, the fast axis 1120A is oriented in the x-direction while LC 1120B is oriented in the y-direction. A fast axis between 1120A and 1120B are aligned along directions intermediate to the x and y-directions. The uniaxial waveplate having such a patterned orientation gives rise to a geometric-phase shift of light as a consequence of polarization evolution as light waves of the light propagate through the waveplate (e.g., phase plate). In various embodiments, orientations of the fast axis along the x-axis are constant for a particular x-y plane of the grating 1100. Further, though not illustrated, in various embodiments, orientations of the fast axis in a direction perpendicular to the x-y plane (the z-axis) may vary in a rotational fashion (e.g., a twisted structure).

The linearly repetitive pattern of the grating 1100 has a pitch that is half the distance 1130 along the y-axis between

repeated portions of the pattern. The pitch determines, in part, the optical properties of the grating **1100**. For example, polarized light incident along the optical axis on the grating **1100** results in a grating output comprising primary, conjugate, and leakage light respectively corresponding to diffraction orders $m=+1$, -1 , and zero. Although $m=+1$ is herein considered to be the primary order and the conjugate order is considered to be the $m=-1$ order, the designation of the orders could be reversed or otherwise changed. The pitch determines the diffraction angles (e.g., beam-steering angles) of the light in the different diffraction orders. Generally, the smaller the pitch, the larger the angles for a given wavelength of light.

In some embodiments, a PBP grating, such as **1100**, may be active (also referred to as an “active element”) or passive (also referred to as a “passive element”). An active PBP grating, for example, has three optical states, similar to that of an active PBP lens: an additive state, a neutral state, and a subtractive state. In an additive state, the active PBP grating diffracts light of a particular wavelength to an angle that is positive relative to the diffraction angle of the subtractive state. In the subtractive state, the active PBP grating diffracts light at a particular wavelength to an angle that is negative relative to the positive angle of the additive state. On the other hand, in the neutral state, the PBP grating does not lead to a diffraction of light and does not affect the polarization of light passing through the active PBP grating.

The state of an active PBP grating may be determined by a handedness of polarization of light incident on the active PBP grating and a measure of the electric field applied to the active PBP grating. For example, in some embodiments, an active PBP grating operates in a subtractive state responsive to incident light with a right-handed circular polarization and an applied electric field of zero (or, more generally, below a threshold electric field). In some embodiments, the PBP grating operates in an additive state responsive to incident light with a left-handed circular polarization and an applied electric field of zero. In some embodiments, the PBP grating operates in a neutral state (regardless of polarization) responsive to an applied electric field. Liquid crystals with positive dielectric anisotropy may be aligned along an applied electric field direction. If the active PBP grating is in the additive or subtractive state, then light output from the active PBP grating has a handedness that is opposite the handedness of light input into the active PBP grating. If the active PBP grating is in the neutral state, then light output from the active PBP grating has the same handedness as the light input into the active PBP grating.

The state of a passive PBP grating is determined by a handedness of polarization of light incident on the passive PBP grating. For example, in some embodiments, a passive PBP grating operates in a subtractive state responsive to incident light with a right-handed circular polarization. In some embodiments, the passive PBP grating operates in an additive state responsive to incident light with a left-handed circular polarization. For the passive PBP grating in the additive or subtractive state, light output from the passive PBP grating has a handedness that is opposite the handedness of light input into the passive PBP grating.

Generating Artificial Reality Content Using a Foveated Display System

FIG. **12** illustrates a method for generating artificial reality content using a foveated display system, according to various embodiments. Although the method steps are described with reference to the systems of FIGS. **1-3** and

5-11, persons skilled in the art will understand that any system may be configured to implement the method steps, in any order, in other embodiments. In particular, the method is described with reference to the foveated display system **500** of FIG. **5** as an illustrative example, but the method may also be implemented with other foveated display systems such as the foveated display system **400** of FIG. **4**.

As shown, a method **1200** begins at block **1202**, where an application causes a projected image to be generated using at least the diffuser **508** that is in line with the HOE **526**. The application may be, e.g., one of the applications stored in the application store **355**, which as described above in conjunction with FIG. **3** may include gaming applications, conferencing applications, video playback applications, or any other suitable applications. Although described with respect to such an application, in other embodiments some or all steps of the method **1200** may be performed by an engine such as the engine **365** described above in conjunction with FIG. **3**.

As described above in conjunction with FIGS. **4-7**, the diffuser **508** may be polarization, angular, and wavelength selective in some embodiments. In such cases, diffuser **508** may reflect and diffuse light having a particular handedness of polarization and within a particular range of wavelengths that is projected onto the diffuser **508** within a particular range of angles, while allowing other light (e.g., real-world light) to pass through the diffuser **508**. As a result, the diffuser **508** may be used to generate a low-resolution, large FOV background image for non-foveal regions of a user’s eye gaze. In some embodiments, the diffuser **508** may be included within a pancake lens, as described above in conjunction with FIGS. **6-7**.

FIG. **13** illustrates in greater detail block **1202** of the method **1200** of FIG. **12**, according to various embodiments. Although the method steps are described with reference to the systems of FIGS. **5-7**, persons skilled in the art will understand that any system may be configured to implement the method steps, in any order, in other embodiments. In particular, although described with reference to the foveated display system **500** of FIG. **5** as an illustrative example, the method steps may also be implemented with other foveated display systems such as the foveated display system **400** of FIG. **4**.

At block **1302**, the application determines a background image for the non-foveal regions of a user’s eye gaze. As described, the non-foveal regions correspond to the peripheral vision of the user, so the background image that is determined at block **1304** need not be of the same resolution (i.e., pixel density) as a virtual image generated for a foveal region of the user’s eye gaze. The background image that is determined at step **1302** may be any suitable image, and the particular image will generally depend on the application.

At block **1304**, the application causes the background image to be projected at an angle onto the diffuser **508**. In some embodiments, the diffuser may be included within a pancake lens that increases a propagating distance of light. In other embodiments, the diffuser may be distinct from a pancake lens. As described, the diffuser may also be polarization, angular, and wavelength selective in some embodiments so as to reflect and diffuse light having a particular handedness of polarization and particular wavelengths that is projected at particular angles onto the diffuser, while allowing other light (e.g., real-world light) to pass through the diffuser.

Returning to FIG. **12**, at block **1204**, the application determines a pupil position of an eye of the user. In embodiments, any technically feasible eye-tracking tech-

25

nique(s) may be employed. For example, the application may analyze tracking data related to the user's eye that is generated using one or more illumination sources and an imaging device (camera) included in a NED or HMD that is worn by the user, as described above in conjunction with FIG. 3.

At block 1206, the application causes a virtual image to be generated and focused on a foveal region of a user's eye gaze using at least the HOE 526, based on the pupil position determined at block 1204. In some embodiments, a steering range of the MEMS mirror 524 that is used to focus light generated via the SLM 516 may further be increased using the switchable PBP grating stack 802, as described above in conjunction with FIGS. 7-8.

As described, the HOE 526 is an angular- and wavelength-selective lens that permits light associated with the projected image and generated at block 1202, as well as real-world light, to pass through the HOE 526. In addition, the HOE 526 is configured to reflect and focus light of particular wavelengths from the MEMS mirror 524 that is incident on the HOE 526 at particular angles towards a foveal region of a user's eye gaze, thereby generating high-resolution imagery.

FIG. 14 illustrates in greater detail block 1206 of the method 1200 of FIG. 12, according to various embodiments. Although the method steps are described with reference to the systems of FIGS. 5 and 8-11, persons skilled in the art will understand that any system may be configured to implement the method steps, in any order, in other embodiments. In particular, although described with reference to the foveated display system 500 of FIG. 5 as an illustrative example, the method steps may also be implemented with other foveated display systems such as the foveated display system 400 of FIG. 4.

As shown, at block 1402, the application causes the SLM 516 to modulate light emitted by the projection device 514. As described, in some embodiments, the SLM 516 may provide a holographic display that uses light diffraction to create a high-resolution virtual image that is focused on the foveal region of a user's eye gaze. In such cases, the application may determine modulation(s) to light emitted by the projection device 514 that are required to generate the high-resolution virtual imagery and control the SLM 516 accordingly. Any suitable modulations may be determined, and the particular modulations will generally depend on the application. In addition, light modulated by the SLM 516 may be focused onto the MEMS mirror 524 via the concave mirror 508 and one or more beam splitters (e.g., the beam splitters 506 and 902) in some embodiments.

As shown, at block 1404, the application determines an angle with which to steer light using the MEMS mirror 414 onto the HOE 526 based on the pupil position determined at block 1204 of the method 1200. As described, the determined angle is an angle necessary to focus light onto a foveal region of a user's eye gaze that corresponds to the determined pupil position.

At block 1406, the application determines whether the angle is within a steering range of the MEMS mirror 524. As described, a steering range of the MEMS mirror 524 may be limited by the tilt angle achievable by the MEMS mirror 524 in some embodiments. For example, a horizontal steering range of the MEMS mirror 524 could be limited to $\pm 15^\circ$ without active PBP grating elements, and a vertical steering range of the MEMS mirror 524 could be limited to $\pm 10^\circ$ without active PBP elements.

If the application determines that the angle is within the steering range of the MEMS mirror 524, then at block 1408,

26

the application causes the MEMS mirror to steer light at the angle determined at block 1404. For example, the application could send a control signal to electromagnetically drive the MEMS mirror 524 based on the angle determined at block 1404. In this case, the switchable PBP grating stack 802 is not switched on (or is switched off if the switchable PBP grating stack 802 is already on).

If, on the other hand, the angle is not within the steering range of the MEMS mirror 524, then at block 1410, the application determines an angle with which to steer light onto the HOE 526 using the MEMS mirror 524 with the switchable PBP grating stack 802 switched on. For example, if the switchable PBP grating stack 802 is configured to double the steering range of the MEMS mirror 524, then the application could divide the angle determined at block 1404 by two at block 1410.

At block 1412, the application causes the switchable PBP grating stack 802 to be switched on and the MEMS mirror 524 to steer light at the angle determined at block 1410. As described, the switchable PBP grating stack 802 may be switched on by switching on the switchable half-wave plate 1004.

Returning to FIG. 12, at step 1208, the application determines whether to continue to another point in time. If the application determines to continue, then the method 1200 returns to step 1202, where the application causes another projected image to be generated using at least the diffuser 508 that is in line with the HOE 526. On the other hand, if the application determines not to continue, then the method 1200 ends.

One advantage of the foveated display systems disclosed herein is that the foveated display systems generate high-resolution virtual imagery for a foveal region of a user's eye gaze along with low-resolution, large field of view background imagery for other regions of the user's eye gaze. A diffuser that is used to generate the projected imagery can be disposed within a pancake lens, which is a relatively compact (i.e., thinner) design that is beneficial for applications with a HMD or other devices where a small form factor and weight are considerations. In addition, a switchable Pancharatnam-Berry phase grating stack can be used to increase the steering range of a beam-steering device used to generate the high-resolution virtual imagery such that, e.g., light associated with the virtual imagery can be steered to cover an entire field of view that is visible to the user's eye. These technical advantages represent one or more technological advancements over prior art approaches.

1. Some embodiments include a pancake lens comprising a half-wave plate, a polarization- and angular-selective mirror, a diffuser, and a half mirror.

2. The pancake lens according to clause 1, wherein the diffuser is polarization and angular selective.

3. The pancake lens according to clauses 1 or 2, wherein the diffuser is configured to reflect and diffuse light having one handedness of polarization that is incident on the diffuser at an angle.

4. The pancake lens according to any of clauses 1-3, wherein the light incident on the diffuser at the angle includes light emitted by a light source that is projected onto the diffuser via the polarization- and angular-selective mirror and the half-wave plate, the polarization- and angular-selective mirror is configured to maintain a handedness of polarization of the light emitted by the light source, and the half-wave plate is configured to change a handedness of polarization of light that has passed through the polarization- and angular-selective mirror.

5. The pancake lens according to any of clauses 1-4, wherein the diffused light is further passed through the half-wave plate, which changes a handedness of polarization of the diffused light, light that has passed through the half-wave plate is reflected by the polarization- and angular-selective mirror, light that has been reflected by the polarization- and angular-selective mirror is passed for a second time through the half-wave plate, which changes a handedness of polarization of the light that has been reflected by the polarization- and angular-selective mirror, light that has passed for the second time through the half-wave plate is passed through the diffuser, light that has passed through the diffuser is reflected by the half mirror, which changes a handedness of polarization of the light that has passed through the diffuser, light that has been reflected by the half mirror is passed for a second time through the diffuser, light that has passed for the second time through the diffuser is passed for a third time through the half-wave plate, which changes a handedness of polarization of the light that has passed for the second time through the diffuser, and light that has passed for the third time through the half-wave plate is passed through the polarization- and angular-selective mirror toward an eye box.

6. The pancake lens according to any of clauses 1-5, wherein the diffuser is further wavelength selective.

7. The pancake lens according to any of clauses 1-6, wherein the diffuser comprises a cholesteric liquid crystal material.

8. The pancake lens according to any of clauses 1-7, wherein the half mirror has focal power.

9. The pancake lens according to any of clauses 1-8, wherein the pancake lens is included in a peripheral display system configured to generate a low-resolution, high field of view background image.

10. The pancake lens according to any of clauses 1-9, wherein the pancake lens is included in a head-mounted display.

11. Some embodiments include a display system comprising a projector, and a pancake lens comprising a diffuser.

12. The display system according to clause 11, wherein the projector is configured to project light onto the diffuser.

13. The display system according to clauses 11 or 12, wherein the pancake lens further comprises a half-wave plate, a polarization- and angular-selective mirror, and a half mirror.

14. The display system according to any of clauses 11-13, wherein the diffuser is polarization and angular selective.

15. The display system according to any of clauses 11-14, wherein the diffuser is configured to reflect and diffuse light having one handedness of polarization that is incident on the diffuser within a range of angles.

16. The display system according to any of clauses 11-15, wherein light bounces twice within the pancake lens.

17. The display system according to any of clauses 11-16, further comprising a condenser.

18. The display system according to any of clauses 11-17, wherein the display system is included in an artificial reality system.

19. Some embodiments include a method comprising determining an image to display, and projecting the image onto a diffuser, wherein the diffuser is included within a pancake lens.

20. The method according to clause 19, wherein the diffuser is polarization and angular selective.

Any and all combinations of any of the claim elements recited in any of the claims and/or any elements described in

this application, in any fashion, fall within the contemplated scope of the present disclosure and protection.

The foregoing description of the embodiments of the disclosure has been presented for the purpose of illustration; it is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the disclosure to the precise forms disclosed. Persons skilled in the relevant art can appreciate that many modifications and variations are possible in light of the above disclosure.

Some portions of this description describe the embodiments of the disclosure in terms of algorithms and symbolic representations of operations on information. These algorithmic descriptions and representations are commonly used by those skilled in the data processing arts to convey the substance of their work effectively to others skilled in the art. These operations, while described functionally, computationally, or logically, are understood to be implemented by computer programs or equivalent electrical circuits, microcode, or the like. Furthermore, it has also proven convenient at times, to refer to these arrangements of operations as modules, without loss of generality. The described operations and their associated modules may be embodied in software, firmware, hardware, or any combinations thereof.

Any of the steps, operations, or processes described herein may be performed or implemented with one or more hardware or software modules, alone or in combination with other devices. In one embodiment, a software module is implemented with a computer program product comprising a computer-readable medium containing computer program code, which can be executed by a computer processor for performing any or all of the steps, operations, or processes described.

Embodiments of the disclosure may also relate to an apparatus for performing the operations herein. This apparatus may be specially constructed for the required purposes, and/or it may comprise a general-purpose computing device selectively activated or reconfigured by a computer program stored in the computer. Such a computer program may be stored in a non-transitory, tangible computer readable storage medium, or any type of media suitable for storing electronic instructions, which may be coupled to a computer system bus. Furthermore, any computing systems referred to in the specification may include a single processor or may be architectures employing multiple processor designs for increased computing capability.

Embodiments of the disclosure may also relate to a product that is produced by a computing process described herein. Such a product may comprise information resulting from a computing process, where the information is stored on a non-transitory, tangible computer readable storage medium and may include any embodiment of a computer program product or other data combination described herein.

Finally, the language used in the specification has been principally selected for readability and instructional purposes, and it may not have been selected to delineate or circumscribe the inventive subject matter. It is therefore intended that the scope of the disclosure be limited not by this detailed description, but rather by any claims that issue on an application based hereon. Accordingly, the disclosure of the embodiments is intended to be illustrative, but not limiting, of the scope of the disclosure, which is set forth in the following claims.

The descriptions of the various embodiments have been presented for purposes of illustration, but are not intended to be exhaustive or limited to the embodiments disclosed. Many modifications and variations is apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art without departing from the scope and spirit of the described embodiments.

Aspects of the present embodiments may be embodied as a system, method, or computer program product. Accordingly, aspects of the present disclosure may take the form of an entirely hardware embodiment, an entirely software embodiment (including firmware, resident software, micro-
code, etc.) or an embodiment combining software and hardware aspects that may all generally be referred to herein as a “module” or “system.” Furthermore, aspects of the present disclosure may take the form of a computer program product embodied in one or more computer readable medium(s) having computer readable program code embodied thereon.

Any combination of one or more computer readable medium(s) may be utilized. The computer readable medium may be a computer readable signal medium or a computer readable storage medium. A computer readable storage medium may be, for example, but not limited to, an electronic, magnetic, optical, electromagnetic, infrared, or semiconductor system, apparatus, or device, or any suitable combination of the foregoing. More specific examples (a non-exhaustive list) of the computer readable storage medium would include the following: an electrical connection having one or more wires, a portable computer diskette, a hard disk, a random access memory (RAM), a read-only memory (ROM), an erasable programmable read-only memory (EPROM or Flash memory), an optical fiber, a portable compact disc read-only memory (CD-ROM), an optical storage device, a magnetic storage device, or any suitable combination of the foregoing. In the context of this document, a computer readable storage medium may be any tangible medium that can contain, or store a program for use by or in connection with an instruction execution system, apparatus, or device.

Aspects of the present disclosure are described above with reference to flowchart illustrations and/or block diagrams of methods, apparatus (systems) and computer program products according to embodiments of the disclosure. It is understood that each block of the flowchart illustrations and/or block diagrams, and combinations of blocks in the flowchart illustrations and/or block diagrams, can be implemented by computer program instructions. These computer program instructions may be provided to a processor of a general purpose computer, special purpose computer, or other programmable data processing apparatus to produce a machine. The instructions, when executed via the processor of the computer or other programmable data processing apparatus, enable the implementation of the functions/acts specified in the flowchart and/or block diagram block or blocks. Such processors may be, without limitation, general purpose processors, special-purpose processors, application-specific processors, or field-programmable gate arrays.

The flowchart and block diagrams in the figures illustrate the architecture, functionality, and operation of possible implementations of systems, methods, and computer program products according to various embodiments of the present disclosure. In this regard, each block in the flowchart or block diagrams may represent a module, segment, or portion of code, which comprises one or more executable instructions for implementing the specified logical function(s). It should also be noted that, in some alternative implementations, the functions noted in the block may occur out of the order noted in the figures. For example, two blocks shown in succession may, in fact, be executed substantially concurrently, or the blocks may sometimes be executed in the reverse order, depending upon the functionality involved. It will also be noted that each block of the block diagrams and/or flowchart illustration, and combina-

tions of blocks in the block diagrams and/or flowchart illustration, can be implemented by special purpose hardware-based systems that perform the specified functions or acts, or combinations of special purpose hardware and computer instructions.

While the preceding is directed to embodiments of the present disclosure, other and further embodiments of the disclosure may be devised without departing from the basic scope thereof, and the scope thereof is determined by the claims that follow.

What is claimed is:

1. A pancake lens, comprising:

- a half-wave plate;
- a polarization- and angular-selective mirror;
- a diffuser; and
- a half mirror.

2. The pancake lens of claim 1, wherein the diffuser is polarization and angular selective.

3. The pancake lens of claim 2, wherein the diffuser is configured to reflect and diffuse light having one handedness of polarization that is incident on the diffuser at an angle.

4. The pancake lens of claim 3, wherein:

- the light incident on the diffuser at the angle includes light emitted by a light source that is projected onto the diffuser via the polarization- and angular-selective mirror and the half-wave plate;

- the polarization- and angular-selective mirror is configured to maintain a handedness of polarization of the light emitted by the light source; and

- the half-wave plate is configured to change a handedness of polarization of light that has passed through the polarization- and angular-selective mirror.

5. The pancake lens of claim 3, wherein:

- the diffused light is further passed through the half-wave plate, which changes a handedness of polarization of the diffused light;

- light that has passed through the half-wave plate is reflected by the polarization- and angular-selective mirror;

- light that has been reflected by the polarization- and angular-selective mirror is passed for a second time through the half-wave plate, which changes a handedness of polarization of the light that has been reflected by the polarization- and angular-selective mirror;

- light that has passed for the second time through the half-wave plate is passed through the diffuser;

- light that has passed through the diffuser is reflected by the half mirror, which changes a handedness of polarization of the light that has passed through the diffuser;

- light that has been reflected by the half mirror is passed for a second time through the diffuser;

- light that has passed for the second time through the diffuser is passed for a third time through the half-wave plate, which changes a handedness of polarization of the light that has passed for the second time through the diffuser; and

- light that has passed for the third time through the half-wave plate is passed through the polarization- and angular-selective mirror toward an eye box.

6. The pancake lens of claim 2, wherein the diffuser is further wavelength selective.

7. The pancake lens of claim 1, wherein the diffuser comprises a cholesteric liquid crystal material.

8. The pancake lens of claim 1, wherein the half mirror has focal power.

31

9. The pancake lens of claim 1, wherein the pancake lens is included in a peripheral display system configured to generate a low-resolution, high field of view background image.

10. The pancake lens of claim 1, wherein the pancake lens is included in a head-mounted display.

11. A display system, comprising:

a projector; and

a pancake lens comprising a diffuser and two mirrors, wherein the diffuser is disposed between the two mirrors.

12. The display system of claim 11, wherein the projector is configured to project light onto the diffuser.

13. The display system of claim 11, wherein the two mirrors comprise a polarization- and angular-selective mirror and a half mirror, and the pancake lens further comprises a half-wave plate.

14. The display system of claim 11, wherein the diffuser is polarization and angular selective.

32

15. The display system of claim 14, wherein the diffuser is configured to reflect and diffuse light having one handedness of polarization that is incident on the diffuser within a range of angles.

16. The display system of claim 11, wherein light bounces twice within the pancake lens.

17. The display system of claim 11, further comprising a condenser.

18. The display system of claim 11, wherein the display system is included in an artificial reality system.

19. A method, comprising:

determining an image to display; and

projecting the image onto a pancake lens comprising a diffuser and two mirrors, wherein the diffuser is disposed between the two mirrors.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the diffuser is polarization and angular selective.

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